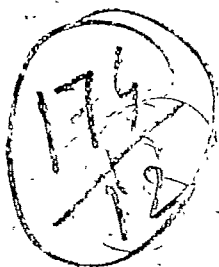


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1976-1977



# BULLETIN OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

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**ESSAYS PRESENTED TO PROFESSOR SRICHANDRA SEN**

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UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA

**BULLETIN OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**  
**CALCUTTA UNIVERSITY**

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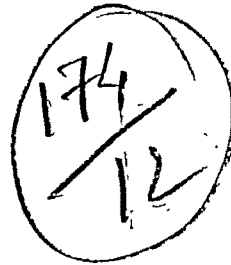
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Professor Srichandra Sen, who taught English for well over a quarter of a century at the University of Calcutta, was born in 1905, in a family distinguished for its contribution to literature and scholarship. His father was an eminent man of letters and the first Professor of Bengali at the University, two elder brothers were historians, while a nephew is one of the foremost Bengali poets. Sen joined the English Department shortly after completing his work on the twentieth-century English novel, becoming later Reader in English and, for some time, Head of the Department. A travelling fellowship had enabled him during the forties to work at Cambridge on the ideological background of Daniel Defoe. The monograph, which was subsequently published, has been mentioned by E. M. W. Tillyard as his principal source for a chapter in *The English Epic and its Background*. Sen's later writings, mostly on twentieth-century poetry, appeared in the *Bulletin of the Department of English* which he founded and also edited until his appointment to the chair of English at Visva-Bharati University in 1965.

The Board of Editors of this Journal have decided to offer this special number in acknowledgement of the debts they owe to a beloved teacher whose life has been marked by a single-minded devotion to scholarship, and whose lectures have inspired generations of students with an abiding enthusiasm for English literature.

# "A POEM SHOULD . . . BE" : MIMETIC AND DIDACTIC MODES OF POETRY

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ARMIN PAUL FRANK

## I

TIME was when it was felt that the age of poetry was degenerating into a parasitic age of criticism. Today, by all appearances, we are well into the age of meta-criticism, and the next epicycle is already spinning : the criticism of meta-criticism. But poetry, like Münchhausen, has a way of extracting itself from the quicksand by its own hair.<sup>1</sup> For since its medium, language, is also the instrument of reflection and communication, reflections about the art of poetry may become part of poetry ; in fact criticism and the theory of poetry are at times themselves metamorphosed into poetry.

This sleight of hand comes off to advantage in Ted Hughes' poem "The Thought-Fox." Hughes, who likes to compare the writing of poetry with hunting and fishing and who, in *Poetry in the Making*, describes a poem as a "new species of creature, a new specimen of the life outside your own," has given "The Thought-Fox" a prominent position in his work : He has taken it out of the original company it kept in *The Hawk in the Rain* and has moved it to first place in his *Selected Poem, 1957-1967*.<sup>2</sup>

### The Thought-Fox

I imagine this midnight moment's forest :  
Something else is alive  
Beside the clock's loneliness  
And this blank page where my fingers move.

Through the window I see no star :  
Something more near  
Though deeper within darkness  
Is entering the loneliness :

Cold, delicately as the dark snow  
A fox's nose touches twig, leaf ;  
Two eyes serve a movement, that now  
And again now, and now, and now

Sets neat prints into the snow  
 Between trees, and warily a lame  
 Shadow lags by stump and in hollow  
 Of a body that is bold to come

Across clearings, an eye,  
 A widening deepening greenness,  
 Brilliantly, concentratedly,  
 Coming about its own business

Till, with a sudden sharp hot stink of fox  
 It enters the dark hole of the head.  
 The window is starless still ; the clock ticks,  
 The page is printed.

It is night, and the speaker of this poem is sitting before an empty sheet of paper. His thoughts wander to the dark forest outside as he imagines it to be at this very minute, to "this midnight moment's forest." The demonstrative pronoun "this" here and in line four creates an impression of immediacy which is reinforced by the use of the present tense throughout the entire poem. The reader is thus fictitiously drawn into the very moment of creation which in this poem constitutes both form and meaning. The fictitious nature of the reader's implication is underlined by the fact that the whole poem is strategically placed under the augury of the imagination ("I imagine..."): He vicariously observes something approach which is nearer yet darker than the starless night outside—though he may be reading this poem in brilliant sunlight on a park bench or under the bright neon lights of a classroom or in a thousand different situations. Whatever it is that approaches begins to assume gestures of foxiness in stanza three: a sniffing nose, two wary eyes, a shadow lagging behind a purposefully moving body. The figure as a whole, however, remains indistinct, without contour, recognizable only through characteristic detail—the most characteristic and clearly recognizable being the footprints left behind in the snow. Again, it is with extreme emphasis on the present moment that the footprints are referred to—and in the precise middle of the poem:

.. that now  
 And again now, and now, and now  
 Sets neat prints into the snow...

The strange creature finally comes so close that a single one of its eyes suffices to fill out the entire field of vision of the observer, an eye which now begins to illuminate the night in its own, perhaps somewhat spectre-

like fashion : It turns into a comprehensive, green brilliance. Having been summoned by the imagination, no one can stop it as it is "coming about its own business" in a single, determined sweep—just as the syntax of the poem breaks loose in stanza three at the very moment that the strange presence makes itself felt in its first manifestations, cuts across line and stanza ending, and moves towards its aim in an unbroken movement, a movement which no longer follows the rules of conventional syntax and may therefore also be said to be without contours, syntactically speaking : The objective of both movements, the syntactic and the imagined one, is to achieve a single explosive moment of recognition :

Till, with a sudden sharp hot stink of fox

It enters the dark hole of the head.

And this brings the reader to the last stanza. Nothing has changed in that nocturnal room, yet everything has changed : Due to the double meaning of the word "print," what was formerly a "blank page" has now been filled, clearly and distinctly, with the "neat prints" of the visiting night creature : "The page is printed." The last line confirms that a poem has come into existence, brilliantly, out of the uncharted darkness of imaginative language, and has imprinted itself upon the reader's consciousness.

Two points deserve to be emphasized : In the first place, the poem and its present reading may give rise to the impression that it is nothing but a versified variant of late expressionistic ideas about how a poem is made—or a makes itself. For it is easily remembered that T. S. Eliot, following Gottfried Benn, has described the making of a (lyrical) poem as the articulation of a "mute, creative germ" : There is, first, an impulse, unidentified and uncontrollable, which coerces the poet to write—and the words of the arising poem serve to give this impulse a face and a name. Only when the poem has been completed can the poet see what it is.<sup>3</sup>

There is, however, a second point, and one of supreme importance in defining the ontological status of a poetological poem as here envisaged : What distinguishes a poem such as "The Thought-Fox" from corresponding theoretical statements is the simple yet all-important fact that whatever knowledge of the creative process may be contained in the poem has been transposed into immediate experience ; metaphorically speaking : Insight has been made visible. This is not to say that the thought-fox itself is an allegorical figure that *exists for the* sole purpose of getting translated or re-translated into a theoretical statement. Most emphatically not : The fox does not "stand for" "the poem" or "the idea for a poem"—it is a fox, and remains one throughout—a fox, it is true, with a rather unusual habitat. And the poem which he inhabits is a poem in the full modern sense of the word.<sup>4</sup>

The features of "The Thought-Fox" which have been emphasized here—not the least of which is the sleight-of-hand which brings the poem to a close at the very moment and with the very same words which complete the depiction of the creative process—combine to contribute to the decisive distinction of the poetological poem: It replaces—or may be displaces—a theoretical statement with an event in language.

This linguistic act is not constituted by referential meaning alone, as are everyday communicative utterances in which syntax is a mere vehicle; rather syntax, sound, line and stanza structure, down to the most minute detail, combine with the lexicon to form an event in language which employs all of its resources to constitute an experience. Thus, in stanza three, line two, the rhythm of the line is just as hesitant as the fox's nose is described to be, the nose which "touches twig, leaf"; or, when it is said that the thought-fox, in approaching, is "bold to come/Across clearings," the phrase, too, *as phrase*, crosses the break between stanzas four and five.

Considering evidence such as this, would it not be appropriate to call the "Thought-Fox" a *mimetic* poem? For its main objective is not to formulate and communicate an idea, a situation, an occurrence, but to imitate in language whatever it says, to give, as it were, full linguistic body to its imagined content.<sup>5</sup> To be poetological a poem must contain some insight into the nature of poetry; to be a poem in the modern sense of the word, it must replace this insight with an event in language. This definition, if firmly kept in mind, will, hopefully, block off a misunderstanding which is apparently shared even by many of those who have come to realize that poems on poetry constitute a large and variegated field of modern poetry: the misunderstanding that poems on poetry are nothing but versified criticism, hence a subtype of didactic poetry, and therefore, strictly speaking, no poetry at all.

This is, more or less, the verdict of René Wellek, the American dean of literary theory and history of criticism. In his characteristic manner of condensation and apodictic evaluation based on a wide range of material, he dismisses the classical verse poetics as "incursions of criticism into poetry." In the same essay, "The Poet, the Critic, the Poet-Critic" (1970), he uses the term 'meta-poetry' to characterize the short poetological poem since Verlaine's "L' Art poétique," which he calls an "antirhetorical pamphlet."<sup>6</sup>

## II

But even such desultory references to the poetological poem are scarce. Not even a 1965 anthology, *Poems on Poetry*, edited by Robert Wallace

and J. G. Taaffe, seems to have stimulated much interest.<sup>7</sup> A comprehensive and balanced survey of the field has therefore yet to be undertaken. A small step forward was Alfred Weber's lecture and essay, “Kann die Harfe durch ihre Propeller schießen ? : Poetologische Lyrik in Amerika” (1969 ; the title, “Can the harp shoot through its propellers ?,” is borrowed from a poem by Kenneth Patchen).<sup>8</sup> But Weber's paper, being a first exploratory outing into what seems to be quite an extensive unexplored area, is lacking both in precision and conspectus ; there is still need and occasion for some basic distinctions.

Hughes' “the Thought-Fox” is an almost perfect example of the *mimetic* type of poetological poem ; Wellek's remarks offer an occasion to consider the *didactic* genre of verse poetics.

The classical line of verse poetics is sufficiently determined by the representative names of Horace (*Epistola ad Pisones*, ca. 15 B. C., since Quintilian known as *Ars poetica*), Vida (*De Arte poetica*, 1572) Boileau (*L'Art poétique* 1674) and Pope (Essay on Criticism, 1709/11)—though this brief list does not by far reflect the popularity of this genre in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. If one is inclined to regard the polemical elements of judicial criticism and personal invective occurring in such works not merely as accidentals but as constitutive parts of the verse poetics (whose classical examples, to be sure, are primarily prescriptive), this line extends through Byron's *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1809) and J. R. Lowell's *Fable for Critics* (1848) well into the 20th century to include Amy Lowell's *A Critical Fable* (1922) and Karl Shapiro's descriptive verse essay on verse, *Essay on Rime* (1945).

Among the factors which make the verse poetics an almost continuously practised genre, two seem especially important :

(1) In those times (and this was rarely enough) when poetry-writing was considered a worth-while and desirable activity, either generally or at least by those who count in such matters, there was quite an interest in learning about the mysteries of the craft, even in verse. This interest may occasionally have been so great that verse poetics made the most rigorous demands precisely when it seemed necessary to dissuade tenacious though untalented ephebes from taking up the trade.<sup>9</sup>

(2) On the other hand, whenever poetry (or at least one or the other of its types) was disregarded or even actively attacked, there was reason to explain or defend it, even in verse. Such attempts at vindication frequently included counter-attacks on Philistines, on critics whose judgments were felt to be unjustified, and on fellow poets who were thought to be unjustly preferred by readers and critics.

In contradistinction to poetological poems verse poetics are



sufficiently characterized by five or six of the following seven criteria :

- (1) They propose clearly and distinctly stated basic definitions of poetry, its genres, traits, and uses, and enumerate principles and general rules.
- (2) They offer special instruction and advice to the prospective author or critic ; they suggest or even prescribe what he is expected to do in special situations.
- (3) They pass judgment on poets and critics, ancient and modern ; especially when they condemn, they sparkle with rhetorical brilliance and bristle with mordant satire.
- (4) They provide illustrations for precepts, suggestions, and hints they have given, either by means of exemplary digressions or by exploiting the especially impressive device of miming rules or precepts while stating them. Part II of Pope's *Essay on Criticism* is justly famed for the brilliant demonstration of both possibilities. Precept plus illustration is the principle of the following passage :

The *Sound* must seem an *Eccho* to the *Sense*.  
Soft is the Strain when *Zephyr* gently blows ,  
And the *smooth Stream* in *smoother Numbers* flows ;  
But when loud Surges lash the sounding Shore,  
The *hoarse, rough Verse* shou'd like the *Torrent* roar.  
When *Ajax* strives, some Rock's vast Weight to throw,  
The Line too *labours*, and the Words move *slow* ;  
Not so, when swift *Camilla* scours the Plain.  
Flies o'er th'unbending Corn, and skims along the Main.<sup>10</sup>

In addition to illustrating ways of creating the impression of rapid movement strictly by means of versification whenever the meaning requires it, the last line, a *functional* Alexandrine, harkens back to, and justifies, the earlier point of criticism regarding the *needless* Alexandrine :

A *needless Alexandrine* ends the Song,  
That like a wounded Snake, drags its slow length along.

These two lines, incidentally, constitute an example of the coincidence of statement and illustration which, in an even more concise form, applies to such lines as

While *Expletives* their feeble aid *do* join ;  
And ten low Words oft creep in one dull Line.

These are no doubt mimetic passage in a verse poetics.<sup>11</sup>

- (5) Yet it is precisely such mimetic passages which help to underline the most important criterion of verse poetics : Hence, mimetic passages are merely illustrations, examples, which either derive from clearly and unambiguously stated principles or lead up to such statements. Hence, the

structure of a verse poetics is a network of such precepts and rules which are either organized in a continuous chain of argument or form an ideally complete system of poetological thought.

(6) Not all verse poetics, it is true, are governed by complete argumentative consistency. Frequently, part of their rhetorical design is an informal conversational tone which is at times completely successful in disguising the argumentative rigor of the structure behind a rather desultory letter style (as in the case of Horace) or a tone of witty parlor discourse (as with Pope). In each instance, however, the coherence and consistency of a verse poetics depends on the logical structure—however much disguised—of the poetological doctrine which it dispenses. This observation now leads to the seventh and last criterion :

(7) Whatever richness of imagery a verse poetics may display, whatever brilliance of versification, sprightly diction, wit—and in the best of the kind, this is quite a lot—all this sumptuous rhetoric has one objective, and one objective only : ornamentation. It serves to provide pleasure and diversion as the poetological doctrine in question is stated, explained, and communicated.

Verse poetics which answer to this description are indeed didactic poetry, are versified theory, instruction, criticism, and polemics.

A summary of what has been said so far would conclude that there are apparently two main types of poetry about poetry : There is the verse poetics, a variant of the didactic poem whose structural principle is the argument which the words used express with the greatest possible precision and elegance. Then there is the mimetic poem about poetry which *is* in words what it expresses with those very words. Whereas a *didactic* poem in principle uses words as signs, just as everyday communicative discourse does, *mimetic* poems also make use of the corporeality of words, of their various sensuous properties.

Such a view certainly is close to a consensus of opinion among the major poets of the modern period. A striking, concise summary of this view is given by Karl Shapiro in the verse essay mentioned above :

Ideas are no more words  
Than phoenixes are birds. The metaphysician  
Deals with ideas as words, the poet with things,  
For in the poet's mind the phoenix sings.<sup>12</sup>

A way of clarifying this passage is to say that the metaphysician—though words are all he has to go on—nevertheless deals in ideas, which, however, are rare birds, as rare as phoenixes. The poet, though also limited to words, tries to flesh out *his* ideas with the quality of sensuous perception, for—even more strangely—he hears the *song* of the phoenix.

Yet certainly we need to go beyond such a systematic distinction of the two main types of poems about poetry, the mimetic and the didactic. Additional insight may be gained by historical differentiation. As a first step (and a first step only) in that direction, the material at hand seems to justify a rough-hewn division into the Classical-Classicist and the post-Classical periods. There is, to be sure, no intention whatsoever to set these two periods up as monolithic blocks without interior differentiation. But this two-part division into a period up to shortly after 1800 and a period since then nevertheless seems sufficient, at this stage and in this context, to explain some historical connections between the mimetic and didactic types of poetry about poetry.

The first important observation concerns the status of didactic poetry in the Classical-Classicist period. At that time, it was normally regarded as a respected form of poetry, as poetry in the sense of what we now consider an art form. No doubt, the continuous debates about the meaning of poetry, which even in classical antiquity saw arguments that aimed at belittling didactic poetry, even at excluding it from the realm of art proper, are part of the interior differentiations mentioned above and therefore not part of the present considerations.

One thing, however, seems certain beyond dispute: Those more or less entertaining didactic poems like *De Rerum natura* by Lucrece, Virgil's *Georgica*, and the *Ars amatoria* of Ovid are what constitute the proper context of Horace's *Ars poetica*. They all provide clearly formulated statements about various areas of human activity and offer pleasurable instruction. Horace's advice is shrewdly pragmatic:

- He will obtain the votes of all with ease  
 Who blends the useful with what's sure to please  
 In him the reader will amusement find  
 And as much moral culture for the mind.<sup>13</sup>

He who knows how to instruct in a pleasing manner is not only a good teacher but—according to Horace—a supreme poet. His work “into future years prolongs his name/And crowns his memory with immortal fame.” Horace was right: Not only his *Ars poetica* as a whole, but also the memorable formulations of detail which it contains, such as the “omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulce” just quoted, have been formative all the way down to the poetic theories of European Classicism. In the Augustan Age, it was considered self-evident that poetry was the skilful dressing-up of traditional views in well-chosen words—and in the 18th century, traditional views were those shared by a self-assured, educated audience. Insofar as Pope's *Essay on Criticism* forms part of this tradition, insofar as it repeats, and approves of, Horatian maxims and

recommendations, it must be considered a didactic poem in this vein. Yet in its time – and this is the crucial fact to be remembered – didactic poetry lived up fully to the poetic ideal. After all, Samuel Johnson, the representative man of letters of the British 18th century, had such a high opinion of the *Essay on Criticism* that his definitive judgment of Pope, in *Lives of the English Poets* (1779-81), includes the statement: Even had Pope written nothing but this single work, he would, on the strength of it alone, have to be counted "among the first critics and the first poets."<sup>14</sup>

This high estimate of the *Essay*, however, was to undergo drastic changes in the course of the next few decades. It was Joseph Warton himself, the editor of Pope's works, who modified Johnson's assessment in one decisive point: He could not find anything of great *poetic* value in the work. *The Essay on Criticism*, he wrote, "may fairly entitle...[Pope] to the character of being one of the first of critics though surely not of poets." The wholesale dismissal of the *Essay* not only as poetry but also as criticism came from Thomas de Quincey in 1847: In his view, it was "substantially a mere versification, like a metrical multiplication-table, of common places the most mouldy with which criticism has baited its rat traps."

These changing critical responses to the *Essay on Criticism* are no doubt a limited, though highly significant indicator, of that fundamental reorientation (not only of poetry and its conception) which, in the name of a Romantic revival (better still, reversal), swept away the critical evaluations of the Classical-Classicist era and their supporting poetological views; they are also indicative of drastic changes in the philosophical and epistemological assumptions which led to the series of irreversible revaluations of the image of man and of his capabilities effected by Nietzsche, Darwin, Marx, Frazer, Kierkegaard, and Freud. There is no occasion here to outline the reasons and modalities of this reorientation, especially since it has received much attention elsewhere. But a single aspect deserves special attention in this connection because it helps to pinpoint the changes in the conception of poetry about poetry as well: It concerns the relationship between content and form, and the relationship of both to non-literary reality.

A pivot of the Classicist view is the well-known sentence from the *Essay on Criticism*:

*True Wit is Nature to Advantage drest,*

What oft was *Thought*, but ne'er so well *Exprest*.<sup>15</sup>

Considering the changes which language and thinking have undergone since the early 18th century, it is well to translate this statement into a more contemporary idiom: Genuine poetry can be found wherever the

natural order of things—which is also the rational order of things and therefore quite naturally includes the additions and improvements of civilization—is expressed with all the appropriate rhetorical ornaments; and since reality and reason are one, we can say: Genuine poetry takes up received ideas, ideas whose truth is undisputed by a civilized and educated audience, and bestows upon them a more attractive, a more striking linguistic form than they have ever received. The sequence here is as follows: (1) Nature as a given rational order; (2) received ideas about it; and (3) words, their beautiful vestment.

The Romantic view reverses this sequence. To quote one representative testimony: In 1817, John Keats stated his conviction that “what the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth”—in other words, that is the power of vision and creation in an individual which constitutes the criterion of truth. And in a manner which clearly reduces the relationship between poetry and so-called empirical reality to second rank, he adds: “...must be truth—whether it existed before or not.”<sup>16</sup>

Those who feel that this intuitive remark on the part of a Romantic poet—though it is at the centre of his poetological convictions—is not solid enough to bear such a far-reaching interpretation, may well remember the view on the dialectical form-content identity expressed by Hegel in his influential *Logics* at about the same time.<sup>17</sup> With an assured tone of self-evidence, Hegel postulates this dialectical form-content *identity* for what he calls “true works of art,” and thus confirms a new and rather rigorous conception of art. Accordingly, the art of poetry is transposed into a realm which transcends the Classicist *dichotomy* of form and content, of verbal ornamentation and embellished ideas. Form is no longer a mere vehicle which points to and heightens a poemload full of thought, and the individual ideas in turn are no longer taken to point individually to verities of life. Ever since, a poem can be a “true work of art” only if it is fashioned in a way which employs all the resources of words and language and ties them together in a manner which creates a world out of language and in language, with its physical and intellectual components interfused, a world with a reality of its own—a primary world whose relationship to that world which is usually referred to as “reality” can only be known if the world of the poem is adequately experienced.

For Classicism, form and content were constituting elements of poetic synthesis. Since the post-Classicist view has won prominence, both concepts can, at best serve as aids for critical analysis. And even in that area more adequate terms and procedures have been tried out for quite some time.

### III

Thus, from the point of view of poetological principle there is hardly anything new in the preceding argument. It was spelled out here because it serves well as a basis for a historical interpretation of the main types of poems on poetry and their interrelation, as follows :

(1) Under a historicist perspective, a verse poetics in its Classical-Classicist form, from Horace to Pope and his contemporaries, ought not to be dismissed as "merely" versified criticism. For in the poetological understanding of its time, an *ars poetica* was a significant form of poetic art.

(2) Due to the fundamental reorientation at the time of the Romantic reversal, the didactic verse poetics has since dropped out of the realm of poetic art ; a verse poetics produced in post-Romantic times is indeed simply versified criticism, however interesting and appealing some of these works may be.

(3) The successor of the verse poetics in the prestigious position of poetic art is the mimetic poem about poetry as initially described ; such poetological poems are indeed poems in the evaluative sense of the word, i. e. poetic theory as poetry.

(4) This historical transition can, perhaps, be briefly explained as follows : Mimetic passages in Classical verse poetics (where indeed they existed, though, as shown, in a purely illustrative function) came into their own as independent poetic structures when the prior argument, in which they were suspended as ornamental touches and displays of rhetorical skill, was no longer acceptable as genuine poetry.

(5) To emphasize such a historical caesura in the early 19th century does not imply that poetological poetry of the mimetic type was altogether unknown in earlier times ; there was even a set poetic exercise known as the "sonnet on the sonnet," which required that description of the difficulties of writing a sonnet should be cast in sonnet form—certainly a precursor of the type of poem of which "The Thought-Fox" is such an outstanding contemporary example.<sup>18</sup> But the precise topology of such poems is still largely in the dark, for the simple reason that whenever research turned its attention to poems on poetry, the much more prestigious verse poetics attracted more attention. Even Wallace and Taaffe, in their anthology, refrain from any historical analysis and differentiation ; the order they impose on their material is strictly a subject matter classification.<sup>19</sup>

But instead of moving further into the direction of historical analysis, the final considerations, on this occasion, are devoted to another modern poem in order to show that, while the title "*Ars poetica*" may be preserved, even poems with such a title may belong to the mimetic type

and therefore may fall into the realm of art in its modern sense. The poem is one which René Wellek has cited among his examples of mere meta-poetry: Archibald MacLeish's 1924 poem, "Ars poetica."<sup>20</sup>

1. A poem should be palpable and mute (1)  
As a globed fruit,
2. Dumb (2)  
As old medallions to the thumb,
3. Silent as the sleeve-worn stone (3)  
Of casement ledges where the moss has grown—
4. A poem should be wordless (4)  
As the flight of birds.
5. A poem should be motionless in time (5)  
As the moon climbs,
6. Leaving, as the moon releases  
Twig by twig the night-entangled trees,
7. Leaving, as the moon behind the winter leaves,  
Memory by memory the mind—
8. A poem should be motionless in time (5)  
As the moon climbs.
9. A poem should be equal to : (4)  
Not true.
10. For all the history of grief (3)  
An empty doorway and a maple leaf.
11. For love (2)  
The leaning grasses and two lights above the sea—
12. A poem should not mean (1)  
But be.

The expectations raised by the title are apparently made good in the very first line by the first four words: "A poem should be..." What a poem should be—isn't that the linguistic gesture most appropriate to a prescriptive verse poetics? And this gesture is indeed maintained throughout as the dominating and organizing syntax element: It reappears anaphora-like six times throughout the poem and serves to mark the tripart division of the poem. This division is reinforced by the fact that the three parts are structured alike internally: The hyphen after couplets three, five, and seven, after "grown," "mind," and "sea," indicate that couplets four, eight, and twelve each sum up the previous three. The poem's structure, then, differentiates the six occurrences of the formula, "A poem should..." into three introductory and three summarizing ones.

Evidently, the title, together with the first occurrence of the phrase "A poem should...", invites the reader to expect something perhaps as

Horatian as "teach" or "delight." But nothing of that order follows. As soon as the expectation has been raised, it is utterly disregarded. None of the usual references to poetic diction or verbal style occurs in the entire poem. It is certainly out of the ordinary that the first quality actually called for is one of touch ("palpable"), and downright paradoxical that the second is muteness. In fact, muteness is emphasized in the first four couplets ("mute"—"dumb"—"silent"—"wordless") and coexists with images of touch in the first three. Their cooperation suggests the eloquence of silent objects: the medallion which may reveal some of its worth to the scrutinizing touch of fingers; the moss-covered stone window-sills whose surfaces, ever so slightly worn down by the elbows of generations of people leaning out, turn them—like poems—into testimonials of past contemplative life, testimonials which are certainly quite indirect and revealing only to a very attentive observer. The paradoxical wordlessness of the poem is summarized in the flight of birds.

The second part, too, begins with a paradoxical demand: The poem, like the rising moon, should be motionless in time. Movement, the image suggests, is dissolved into a sequence of ever so slightly different stills, like on a cinematographic film, and it is in this sequence of static moments that the poem arises from the mind of the poet and sinks into that of the reader. This view, incidentally, has a background in the Imagist poetics in whose wider tradition MacLeish worked in the early twenties; it reminds the reader at each step of the reading process to try and visualize whatever he has read up to this point as a spatial configuration. Precisely this suggestion is mimed by elements of structure of this poem, in the first place by the fact that the couplet which summarizes the central part of the poem is verabally identical with that which introduces it—"A poem should be motionless in time/As the moon climbs."

The two couplets thus serve as a framing device which sets off this moony middle part from the rest of the poem and bestows on it the illusion of being a static image: The moon-scene itself takes on something of the quality of a medallion or miniature painting or carving, or, maybe, of a photo. The second structural trait which supports this impression that the middle part in a sense is lifted out of the rest is the inverted parallelism of the couplets in parts I and III of the poem which is suggested by the numbers 1-5 printed in the right-hand margin and which will be explained in a moment.

The third part also begins with a paradoxical demand upon the poem, one which seems to be in contrast to the most basic of all traditional aesthetic principles, Classical as well as Romantic. Think of the Classical triad of beauty, truth, and goodness. Or



"Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty"! But here: "A poem should be equal to/Not true." Surely, this couplet ought not to be misunderstood as an invitation to mendacity in poetry. After all, the words are not "A poem should not be true", but "equal to/Not true." What follows makes it abundantly clear that the equation here is not between poetry and falsehood but between poetry and a realm beyond verification and falsification: Instead of an abstract conceptual statement which is open to verification and falsification, poetry offers concrete verbal objects which simply exist. Instead of a history of grief (which would be open to debate: what, after all, is grief?), MacLeish offers an image, a vignette, which, alluding to one or more of Ezra Pound's poems from his "imagiste" phase, clearly evokes loneliness after separation.<sup>21</sup> And instead of saying "love" (which tends to call up its opposite or negation), the poem posits one or two appropriate images which are immune to the temptations of dialectics.

In this way, the third part of the poem leads up to the final couplet which, at first glance, might after all look like an anachronism carried over from a didactic verse poetics: "A poem should not mean /But be." Yet what has gone before bestows a world of meaning upon these lines (which, if looked upon in isolation, would indeed be a simple declarative statement saying that a poem should not mean anything). Just as here, for the first time in the poem, the auxiliary verb "to be" is transformed into the full verb, the context transforms this apparently declarative statement into something quite different from what it seems to say.

A poem—and this is the meaning enforced by the pressure of the context—should go beyond mere saying or stating, should, for example, go beyond such abstract nouns as "grief" and "love," to create a structure, a world of language and in language which achieves something like sensuous, physical tangibility, which exists, which is, not like ideas, but "in things." Note the emphasis on *being* by the delay of the transformed auxiliary from five times "A poem should be [this]," "A poem should be [that]" to "A poem should be"—a device of verse music suggesting the held chord at the end, say, of a piece of organ music. Of course, being what it is, a poem also has meaning, the meaning of its existence.

A poetological poem of this type differs decisively from that of the didactic verse poetics. There, the examples or illustrations (which occasionally and in themselves may achieve a similar ontological status), are summarized in clearly and distinctly stated rules and precepts which can be fully understood even if separated from their proper context. In MacLeish's "Ars Poetica," on the other hand, the context changes apparently unambiguous statements such as the final couplet. This indicates that in MacLeish's poetological poem the apparent examples are more than

ornamental illustrations : They are essential components of the poetic structure.

There is a second way in which the apprent examples take on a structural function. Evidently, the motifs embodied in the four couplets of the first part recur, but in inverted order, in those of the third part. For if it is correct that the phrase "Not true" in the fourth to the last couplet signalizes a preference for a type of poetic language which is as physically concrete as language can get, then a metonymic relationship may be said to connect this passage with the wordless flight of birds in the fourth. The connection between the explicit reference to "history" in the third to the last couplet and the history-implying image of the sleeve-worn ledges in the third is as evident as is that between "love" in the second to the last and a medallion, which is frequently worn as a love token, in the second. And the rejection of poetry as declarative statement, implicit in the first couplet, has become explicit in the last.

The structure of the poem, then, may be defined as an overlay of two patterns : a linear development towards what at first glance appears as a straightforward statement in the end, and two catenations of motifs starting at both ends and converging on the middle section which, framed by the fifth and fifth to the last couplets, is highlighted like a medallion or perhaps like an icon.

As in Ted Hughes' "The Thought-Fox," the structure of the poem acts out, imitates, embodies what can be abstracted as its poetological substance. To be quite specific : The poetological substance of this poem does not reside in the last two lines (which are the "moral of the tale" only in appearance) or in any other two or four or six lines : Rather, it resides in the overall structure of the poem. Poetic theory has become a poem, a perfect poem in the modern sense of the word. It acts out what it says, it performs its content. It imitates its meaning in sensuous language in such a way as to make its sensuous-linguistic existence its meaning.

And now we can transplant the last two lines of MacLeish's poetological poem into the present context as the appropriate conclusion :

A poem should not mean  
But be.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Since tradition disagrees as to whether this marvelous feat was performed in a swamp (*Wunderbare Reisen...des Freyherrn von Munchhausen* [London 1786], pp. 54-55) or in a pond (*The Adventures of Baron Munchhausen* [New York n.d.], p. 89), I beg to submit that it may have taken place where I say it did.
2. T. Hughes, "The Thought-Fox," *Selected Poems* (London: Faber & Faber, 1972), p.9; the quotation from *Poetry in the Making: An Anthology of Poems and Programmes from 'Listening and Writing'* (London: Faber & Faber, 1967) is from p. 17.
3. Cf. T.S. Eliot, "The Three Voices of Poetry" (1953), *On Poetry and Poets* (London: Faber & Faber, 1957), esp. pp. 96-98. There, Eliot explicitly speaks of an "obscure impulse. He [the poet] does not know what he has to say until he has said it." For G. Benn, cf. "Probleme der Lyrik" (1947), *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. IV (Wiesbaden: Limes, 1968), esp. pp. 1070-71, 1073.
4. For this reason, I disagree with Keith Sagar who says about the early animal poems of Hughes: "Of these 'The Thought-Fox,' however vividly present in the poem the fox may be, is purely metaphorical" (*The Art of Ted Hughes* [New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1975], p.17). On the other hand, I would agree with his view that the "language mimes in sound and rhythm what it describes" (p.19). Sagar hardly touches upon the poetological aspect of this poem.
5. The translation of "mimetic," as used here, into semiotic terminology, is "iconic"; yet cf. note 18.
6. Cf. R. Wellek, *Discriminations: Further Concepts of Criticism* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1970), esp. pp. 260-62.
7. Cf. *Poems on Poetry: The Mirror's Garland*, ed. R. Wallace & J.G. Taaffe (New York: Dutton, 1965).
8. Cf. *Amerikanische Literatur im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. A. Weber & D. Haack (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971), pp. 175-88.
9. This interesting "hypothesis," as he himself calls it, "about the origin and intention of Horace's Epistle to the Pisos," is submitted by C.M. Wieland in the introduction to his German translation. Cf. *Werke*, ed. F. Martini and H.W. Seiffert, vol. 5 (München: Hanser, 1968), 591-93.
10. A. Pope, *The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope*, vol. I: *Pastoral Poetry and An Essay on Criticism*, ed. A. Audra & A. Williams (London/New Haven: Methuen/Yale Univ. Press, 1961), pp. 281-82; the following two quotations are from pp. 280 and 278 respectively.
11. It is in this connection that P.M. Sparks' argument makes the most sense, namely that there are instances in the poetry of Pope where images serve an expressive function (cf. *An Argument of Images: The Poetry of Alexander Pope* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1971]).
12. K. Shapiro, *Essay on Rime* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1945), p.1.
13. *The Art of Poetry of Horace with Translation in Prose and Verse* by D. [aniel] Bagot (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1858), p. 63.
14. These and the following two evaluative statements have been taken from the Introduction to the *Essay on Criticism, Twickenham Edition* vol. I, p. 208.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 272-73.
16. J. Keats, Letter to Bailey, 22 November 1817, *The Letters of John Keats*, ed. M.B. Forman (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1935), p.67.

17. Cf. G.F.W. Hegel, *Samtliche Werke*, Bd. 8 (Stuttgart: Fromann, 1961), pp. 302-03.

18. Cf. Matthew Russell, *Sonnets on the Sonnet: An Anthology* (London: 1898); L.E. Kastner, "Concerning the Sonnet of the Sonnet," *Modern Language Review*, 11:2 (April 1916), 205-11.

19. I am aware that my use of the term "mimetic" is at variance with received critical usage. A critical position based on the idea of "imitation" traditionally has been one for which the relationship between the artefact and the world around it is the most important critical issue, the leading question: "Is this work true to 'Nature'?" (Cf. M.H. Abrams, *The Mirror And The Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* [London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1953], pp. 8-14). This is the orientation which, after all, Plato and, with modifications, Aristotle have in common; together with the imitation of the ancient models, imitation of Nature is the predominant Classicist principle; it was revived by 19th century Realism and Naturalism in the image of the mirror in the roadway; and it is the basis of censorship exerted by the Marxist-Leninist cultural functionary. Since all these positions are concerned with the way in which a work of art refers to "reality" (which is usually regarded as "primary," hence the work as "derived from reality"), I suggest that the term "referential" is better applicable than "mimetic." The latter term thus becomes available and is here employed to describe a special relationship between verbal form and semantic meaning in a poem. Ludwig Wittgenstein discusses such a relationship where script "depicts the facts that it describes" in a general way in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 4. 016, in the context of 4.0031-4.022 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961), pp. 36-41; Rudolf Carnap uses the term "autonymy" to identify a linguistic expression which is its own designation (cf. *The Logical Syntax of Language*, Pt IV, § 42 [London: Kegan Paul, etc., 1937], p. 156). I take courage in using the term "mimesis" in the sense which I have proposed in this paper, because simultaneously and, of course, independently, it was also so applied by William K. Wimsatt in a short but potentially influential paper, "In Search of Verbal Mimesis," *The Day of the Leopards* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1976), pp. 57-73.

20. A. MacLeish, *New and Collected Poems, 1917-1972* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976), pp. 106-07.

The subsequent interpretation owes much to Professor Alfred Behrmann of Berlin who joined me in teaching a course on poems on poetry in Winter 1974-75; literature on this poem can be found in G.H. Blanke, "Archibald MacLeish: 'Ars Poetica,'" *Jahrbuch fur Amerikastudien* 13 (1968), 236-45.

21. From E. Pound, *Personae: The Collected Poems of Ezra Pound* (New York: Liveright, 1926): "A wet leaf that clings to the threshold" ("Liu Ch'e," p. 108) comes closest; emotionally (though not botanically) very similar is the final line of "Gentildonna," "Grey olive leaves beneath the rain-cold sky" (p. 92). The image, now emotionally not clearly defined, recurs for the rose-leaves or petals that have fallen into the fountain: "Their ochre clings to the stone" ("Ts'AI Chi'H," p. 108); despite Pound's own explication, a "deathly" feel inheres in the petals which cling to the last line of "In a Station of the Metro": "Petals, on a wet black bough" (p. 109).

# THE AUTHOR'S VOICE IN GEORGE MEREDITH'S NOVELS

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A. SINHA

THE perspective requires to be established at the outset. For, till a very short while ago, till some theorists<sup>1</sup> effectively demolished the myth that omniscience is an "untutored" and lazy approach,<sup>2</sup> the author's voice used to be considered in a major body of criticism as a deplorable, at best a sufferable element in old-fashioned novels. Firstly, I would contend that the author's voice abides in all fiction—as those recent theorists have shown—and the idea requires emphasis as the ground is not yet entirely free of old suspicions. Secondly, the author's voice in itself should not be taken as an "intrusion": the question is whether it contributes to the author's creative intention; it is only when it interferes with this intention that it becomes really an intrusion, otherwise not. Finally, omniscience is not just a blanket-term—a label to be clamped down on an author. It is primarily technique—not the absence of technique—, one of the ways in which an author gives form, an image to his materials and theme.

To my mind, what primarily matters in the discussion of an author's omniscience is the *kind* of use he makes of it—for instance, whether he makes his authorial voice explicit and whole-hearted (e.g., Fielding, Thackeray, Forster), explicit and partial (e.g., Jane Austen, Conrad), or peripheral, some-times unavowed (e. g., James, Virginia Woolf, Faulkner), and so forth. Even such classifications are not conclusive, for after all the author's individual approach ultimately determines the artistic relevance, or otherwise, of omniscience in his novels. As for Meredith, the omniscient point of view is assuredly a major aspect of his technique (it is not *the* major one, though—his various, interesting experiments in oblique narration have gone rather uncared for in criticism); this requires critical attention—which has not been properly accorded to it—for an adequate appraisal of his fictional art. I propose in this essay to examine the salient features of the omniscient author convention, and particularly the functions they perform, in Meredith's novels.

Meredith was deliberate in his use of omniscience, holding it at a discount, and was aware of the limitations it might be open to. While my subsequent examination of his use of the technique will bear this out, this is seen to be corroborated by some of the theoretical views he held on the subject. Sometimes his awareness is forthright, as for instance, in

*Sandra Belloni* (1864), where he makes one of his narrators say that the characters in that novel "move themselves,... and no arbitrary hand has posted them to bring about any event and heap the catastrophe"<sup>3</sup>—a view which no doubt resembles Jamesian and post-Jamesian aesthetic of the novel; then there are also his ironical defences of omniscience in his novels, underscored by a regret for having had to resort to it.<sup>4</sup> Such views surely indicate that at least *his* approach to omniscience was far from being an "untutored" one.

Finally, as the starting-point of my discussion, I would say that omniscience is something more than a blanket-term in another sense, too. For the author's voice accommodates many devices—commentary, summary or panorama, block-characterization, dips into characters' minds, shifts in points of view, and so forth. Although these are often intertwined with one another, it is profitable to look at them separately. My chief point of discussion will be Meredith's use of commentary because this is where he has been found and objected to as most "authorial,"<sup>5</sup> but I shall at first discuss the other elements of his omniscience as the necessary context to this examination.

## II

As for "dips" and "shifts", I shall not devote any space to them, because these happen to be very common elements of omniscience of all kinds, even modern, "impersonal" novelists not being free of them, and a discussion of their use cannot reveal anything special in Meredith. Moreover, our expectation while reading him is certainly not a consistency in point of view as, say, in the case of James. The three other major features of omniscience can be considered to fall more within a conventional or "old-fashioned" mode. Now, block-characterisation, or the expository description of a character in the manner of an essay,<sup>6</sup> appears rather infrequently in his novels. For example, the Countess de Saldar and her two sisters in *Evan Harrington* (1861), are to some extent block-characterized in the expository chapter III, but this is so very partial—the greater and larger part of the characterization of the Countess being done through her actions—that it should not count very much. In *Vittoria* (1867), we see this in the characterization of the Chief (pp. 9-10), of Count Serabiglione (pp. 114-17) and of Countess Ammiani (pp. 184-85); but each is a minor character, occupying very little space, a part of the epical superfluity of this particular novel, and the major characters are all more often than not dramatically characterized through their actions, speeches, and thoughts in course of the narration. In *Beauchamp's Career* (1875), we have an expository characterization of Romfrey (pp. 14-9), a major character; but, notwith-

standing the fact that this fits in with the generally overt omniscient form of the earlier chapters (I-XI) it shines as an exception, for none of the other major characters including the hero Beauchamp, is block-characterized ; they are mainly left to dramatic characterization. It may be added that scanty as these block-characterizations are, they are also free of external descriptions of characters, something that is ordinarily associated with the device.<sup>7</sup> Meredith does it noticeably once, in the above-mentioned portrait of Mazzini ("the Chief") in *Vittoria*, and the description is perhaps provoked by the temptation to inject a little vividness into a hotly topical personality of the day. On the whole, Meredith prefers the dramatic unfurling of character, and after *Beauchamp's Career*, he rarely resorts to authorial comment as a major means of characterization.

It is on the question of "panoramic" surveys or summaries that one needs to be a bit more expansive. As is known, the degree of omniscience in third-person narration (of whatever kind) corresponds with the distance in time which the author effects between the reader and the action. Panoramic or long-distance narration stands at one of its extremes, scenic or close-range narration at the other. Now, *Diana* (1885) is the only novel by Meredith which is freely omniscient in the former sense, large and important parts of its action being narrated in panoramic coverages of time, which enfold scenic bits in their sweep (e.g., in chs. XIV, XV, XVII, XVIII, XIX, XXIV, XXXVI, XXXIX). In most novels, Meredith prefers to present the bulk of story as immediately as possible though not always in its "pure", modern form, and uses panorama for temporary and secondary purposes. This tendency can be seen even from his first novel, *Richard Feverel* (1859). The novel opens with a short, panoramic survey of Sir Austin's past in chapter I, which gives us not the main story but its antecedents. After the main action opens in chapter II, with the statement, "October shone royally on Richard's fourteenth birthday" (p.10), our attention is drawn to what keeps on happening immediately in front of us and at a particularized time ; thenceforward the story proceeds in a succession of roughly scenic sequences till the end. There are only occasional short panoramas which appear in the body of the narration (see, e.g., pp.388-89, 378-87, 459-61, 513-17). Their chief function is to bridge in an economic manner the short time-gaps between the successive flows of more or less scenic narration, not outweighing the later. As the story is thus carried by its own momentum, as it were, the narrator is automatically reduced to the role of a contemporaneous observer with a "limited" omniscience, from that of a lofty, all-knowing surveyor ; his control over the narrative thereby becomes more implicit than explicit. Even

if we look at a more "conventional" novel, say *Beauchamp's Career*, the predominance of the same tendency is seen. The first disjointed episodes of the early youth of Beauchamp are frequently narrated in the panoramic form in the first four chapters (e.g., pp.1-10, 20-5, 34-8, 40-7); the same applies to the incidents preparatory to Beauchamp's chief adventures in England, in chapter XI (pp. 92-103). But when these adventures—which constitute the long, central action—start in chapter XII and continue upto chapter LV (ending in p.616), the "contemporaneous" observer's narration is more or less adopted, save in occasional, subservient summaries (e.g., in chs. XXIX, XXXVIII). Close-range narration is given a still greater prominence in most of the other novels. *Sandra Belloni* (1864), for all its variously omniscient intrusions, seldom indulges in overt, panoramic manipulations. Its sequel, *Vittoria*, gives a fully constituted panorama only in the Epilogue which falls beyond the pale of the main action. This main action is presented chiefly in the contemporaneous manner except for a short though noticeable summary in the beginning of chapter XXIX (P. 386)—which bridges the time-gap between the 1847 and the 1848 phases of the action—and some even shorter summaries.<sup>8</sup> The tendency is further matured in the shorter as well as in the later works (save *The Tragic Comedians* (1880). For example, each of the works, *The House on the Beach* (1877), *The Egoist* (1879), and *Lord Ormont* (1894), after presenting a panoramic opening (in their chapters I, II--V, and I-II, respectively),<sup>9</sup> rigorously follow a succession of close-range, narrative sequences to the end.<sup>10</sup> Almost the same is done in *Chloe* (1879), with only one panoramic interruption in chapter IV (Memorial ed., XXI, pp. 217-21), which is meant to serve as a preamble to the Duchess's escapade in Bath (ch. IV onwards) and to bridge the time-gap between the beau's meeting with her (ch. III) and this event. In *One of Our conquerors* (1891), the panoramas are neatly placed in what is one of the most scenic patterns of Meredith's narratives. The narration of the main action which runs upto Victor's catastrophe (pp. 1-510) is chiefly contemporaneous, followed by a brief panorama of a year (pp.510-14), functionally affiliated to the major action. Now, in the body of this narration of the main action, there are four short, subservient panoramas worth any name (pp. 122-29, 202-15, 297-300, 477-82), which link up in a rhythmical manner five long sequences of more or less scenic action, and are thus much more schematized than in the previous novels. Thus, Meredith's tendency towards limiting his omniscience is so remarkable. As Geoffrey Tillotson says, Thackeray's scenes are inferior panoramas,<sup>11</sup> it may be said that Meredith's panoramas are basic propulsions to scenic narration. On



person narration of events gives us more the sense of accompanying the action rather than of overlooking it.

What we have so far seen surely shows that Meredith is to a great extent free of the identification with the familiar image of an all-controlling, ubiquitous author. However, the ultimate test of his "author's voice" is in his use of "intrusive" commentaries, which he himself so aptly described as "interdrones" (in the posthumously published *Celt and Saxon*, 1910, p. 183).

### III

It requires to be pointed out that Meredith's commentaries are not for him an obvious resort. Firstly, as regards the social connotation of his commentaries, these are not the necessary overflow of a spirit of social communion in him, of a desire to share with the readers publicly accepted norms as is the case with the majority of eighteenth and nineteenth-century novelists.<sup>13</sup> As the stories illustrate, he rather seeks to establish a private norm of individual conduct and psychology in deviation from social norms.<sup>13</sup> Secondly, while commentaries are partly expected to *tell* the reader the meanings and significances of the stories, Meredith largely communicates such meanings through indirect methods, such as repetition of themes, verbal echoes, parallelisms, images, and so forth. Thirdly, he rarely resorts to the extended commentary of the Fielding-Thackeray type: he uses this noticeable only once, in *Celt and Saxon* (ch. XIII); while the "Prelude" in *The Egoist* and ch. I of *Diana* would also appear to be so, large parts of them are not authorial but dramatic.

There are only two novels worth mentioning which considerably suffer from really interfering commentaries. These are the early *Evan Harrington* and *Rhoda Fleming* (1865), in which there is an unabashed, and often unwarranted display of the author's "I".<sup>14</sup> Although not completely free from such disturbing comments, others novels are comparatively wanting in them.<sup>15</sup> It does not follow, however, that this was for Meredith a crude, immature stage in novel-writing: for *Richard Feverel*, which precedes both these novels, is relatively free of such disturbances. Once or twice the author makes intrusive comments in minor contexts (e.g., p. 355), but these are sunk in the delightfully ironical tone that pervades the writing throughout. The truth, rather, is that *Evan Harrington* and *Rhoda Fleming* were written when Meredith was a young man groping for his form, and in these he experimented with the Thackerayesque-Trollopean narrative. Major commentaries are mostly functional, and for the sake of convenience in discussion, I shall

divide them into several classes, although the classes overlap and are not conclusive.

First, let us consider the "self-conscious" commentaries<sup>16</sup> in which Meredith voices his opinions on fiction in general as also on particular works he is writing. This practice, traceable to Fielding, is held to be objectionable on the ground that the author's reminders of his being an author destroys the illusion of the story. I must point out that in Meredith's case these are not prompted by an urge towards a garrulous showmanship but by the *narrative* necessity to show the reader that he was writing a new kind of novel. This newness chiefly consists in his emphasis on the individual conduct and psychology of the characters. Since his novels sometimes show superficial resemblances with some existing, conventional types of fiction,<sup>17</sup> he employs these commentaries to help the readers recognize the speciality of his novels and thereby to guide them to the right meanings by countering other expectations. Thus the occasional theoretical digressions in *Sandra Belloni* (see, e.g., pp. 110-11, 113-14, 483) help us realize the fact that the exposure of sentimentalism, part of the novel's theme, is achieved on a *psychological* plane through the exhibition of the complicated psychology of sentimentalists like Wilfrid, and not in the manner of a Thackerayan social satire which we might otherwise consider the novel to be. Likewise, the continual theoretical comments in *Beauchamp's Career*, apparently a loose string of episodes, help us understand that the unity of the novel very much depends on the psychological motivation of Beauchamp's character. These insist that the novel is neither a romance nor a mystery story nor a naturalistic work—in any of which categories Beauchamp's story could be apparently fitted (p. 39), but is one which presents characters "at blood-heat", illustrates motives (p. 7) and "the clock-work of brain" (p. 553), and does not present external reality. This clarifies and heightens our understanding of the novel as an exhibition of character and not as a biographical-cum-picaresque story which form, too, it superficially resembles. I shall not multiply instances—more are covered by my subsequent discussions. What needs to be pointed out is that by mostly highlighting the psychological impulses behind the stories, the comments provide the correct perspective which might be missed by the readers in the context of their acquaintance with most other Victorian novels. These commentaries, the release of the tension of a mind conscious of having left the beaten track are thus pertinent and are not fluid self-revelations.

This general function apart, these self-conscious commentaries sometimes perform specific roles as essential reflections of the distinctive meanings of the novels where they occur, and reveal a maturer level of

art. Thus, for instance, the famous theory of fiction propounded in chapter I of *Diana* is found to be functional by being an illumination of the character of the heroine. Since it is too long to be fully quoted, I shall refer only to its central theme. According to this theory, "Philosophy", which only can be the basis of true fiction, espouses neither the "rose-pink" nor the "dirty-drab" but "active, mind-beaten, but ascending souls" (pp. 15-6), nourishes itself on "brainstuff" which is "internal history" (p. 17), is meant for a minority (p. 18), derides "sentimentalism" (p. 16), and projects the ideal of the "right heroic woman" (p. 19). As we read the story later, we find that this ideal of fiction indirectly serves as an analogue of Diana who, as the author later informs us, is "not an ignorant-innocent, nor a guileless person...often wrestling with her terrestrial nature nobly ; and a growing soul" (p. 399), who "muses on actual life, and fatigues with the exercise of brains" (p. 441). Secondly, this theory helps us understand Diana in another and a more important way ; this it does by being an analogue of the attitude, to life and literature, of Diana as an authoress. She, a novelist, likewise derides popular fiction (e. g., pp. 18, 203) and once denounced sentimentalism in a famous sentence (p. 12 ; the author himself quotes from this phrase to clarify his own attitude much later in p. 399). Therefore, by expounding the "Philosophy", which thus acts as an image of Diana's way of life, the author involves us in an identification with her viewpoint which continues throughout the novel. Then again, this serves a rhetorical purpose in the narration of Diana's story. As she holds the same attitude as the author's, she needs must have the ideal personality ; yet we see in the novel that she errs and suffers because of her blunders. This suggests that her vision of truth, however correct, is only abstract and intellectual, unsupported by an emotional realization, and cannot be of use to her unless she is able to embody it in her life : eventually she achieves this at the end through her acceptance of Redworth (chs. XLII, XLIII). The "theoretical" commentary, therefore, performs actually a narrative function by persuading us that this is the story of an unpractical but clever and good woman who belongs to the right norm of life, and who, prevented at first by her egoism, ultimately realizes the norm by curing herself of the drawback.

In my next instance, taken from *Beauchamp's Career*, Meredith stands apart and invites the reader to look at Beauchamp not as a character in the novel's world but as his created being. This, incidentally, is not a "theory" proper, but an opinion on the work itself, another form of self-conscious commentary. This is a long commentary on Beauchamp as a "hero" :

...To be a public favourite is his last thought... With every inducement to offer himself for a romantic figure, he despises the pomades and curling irons of modern romance. Meantime the exhibition of a hero whom circumstances overcome, and who does not weep or ask you for a tear...must run the chances of a novelty... Nursery Legitimists [writers of romances and sensational stories] will be against him to a man; Republicans [naturalists] likewise .. (pp. 38-9)

The purpose of this commentary is to help the reader have the right sort of response to Beauchamp and to the story, which presents a kind of hero new to popular tastes, despite his superficial similarities to a romantic idol. Meredith does this through a curious interlocking of Beauchamp the reader's hero-image and Beauchamp the person in the story. Now, Beauchamp (the "hero") is liable to offend the prejudices of readers fed on popular novels, although he has "every inducement to offer himself as a romantic figure" to fit in a sentimentally conceived, "striking" story of action. It is against such an expectation that Meredith prepares his readers by pointing out that "to be a public favourite is his last thought". The noticeable thing is that this mock-serious picture of the hero as if deciding of his free will whether to be romantic or not, is an image of Beauchamp the person in the story, whose last thought, too, is to be a public favourite and who offends the prejudices of his uncle and the members of his society in general—as the entire story shows. The imagined objection of the contemporary novelists and the average readers to the novel is therefore an analogue of the discomfort which Beauchamp's world feels about him; the author's own attitude to his novel (as revealed in the passage) is thus analogous to the *ideal* reader's attitude to Beauchamp. In this manner, the view of fiction illustrated in the novel becomes a metaphorical way of high-lighting the unconventionality of Beauchamp's character.

The next type of commentary that I shall discuss is the author's "manipulating" voice which shows his control over the story's materials. These are "foreknowledges" or anticipations whereby Meredith as author "intrudes" with his superior knowledge to tell us of future events. However, their principal object is not the Trollopean aim to let the reader look into the mechanics of the story and satisfy his curiosity or to display the author's knowledge and right, but to produce *narrative effects* which would have been otherwise impossible.

The last lines of chapter I of *Richard Feverel*, for instance, end in an anticipation which is ironical in function. 'He (Sir Austin) had a system of education for his son. *How it worked we shall see*' (p. 10, my italics). Apparently, the lines innocently prepare us for the later operation of the

system, illustrated in the course of the story. But that is not the chief thing. The effect of the anticipation here lies in the mock-simple, staccato, tongue-in-cheek tone which these lines carry from the earlier characterization of Sir Austin (see, e. g., pp. 6, 8, 9-10), and which gives us another, implied meaning: "We shall see that it did not work." As the story gradually unfolds, and we see that the "system" works itself to its destruction step by step till the tragic conclusion, this implied meaning is found to be corroborated. This exposure of the system is made in the story, as every reader notices, through irony. The author's apparently neutral tone in the commentary heightens this irony, and helps the reader have the necessary perspective from the very beginning.

Likewise, a functional use is given to the key anticipation in the beginning of *Rhoda Fleming*, where, after a mock-serious paragraph on Kentish women, the author suddenly becomes serious in a quite poetic manner, obviously to draw special attention to the passage:

My plain story is of two Kentish damsels, and runs from a home of flowers into regions where flowers are few and sickly, on to where the flowers which breathe sweet breath have been proved in mortal fire. (p. 1)

This, in so many words, projects us into the future adventures of the sisters Rhoda and Dahlia from Queen Anne's Farm in their Kentish village to London and then back to the village, which make the story. However, the story is not as "plain" as it is stated, and the images couching it make all the difference. The "home of flowers" refers to the world of nature in Queen Anne's farm, where the two sisters blossom in their maidenly innocence; the region of "few and sickly" flowers suggests the sophisticated, arid world of London where this innocence later wilts and drops; the mixed metaphor in the final clause ("flower proved in fire") anticipates the theme of ordeal—the chastening of Rhoda's and Dahlia's womanhood, which is rounded up by a "fire"-metaphor in the novel's end (p. 499). Thus the function of the anticipation is to guide us into the *inner meaning* of Rhoda's and Dahlia's story, which we can carry along as we read. It also gives us a clue to the structure. In the final clause, the author comments that the story runs "on to where etc.", while we see that the story *physically* runs back to the Kentish village. The phrase thus helps us see that the end of the journey in the village does not imply a simple back-to-Nature romanticism; supported by the final image which is different from the first one, the phrase metaphorically represents the synthesis of the story—the "new" fact of Dahlia's purification achieved back in the same old village—and helps our understanding of the cyclical structure of the novel.

The last type of commentary is evaluative—generalizations on life, conduct, or society.<sup>18</sup> Generalizing commentary in Meredith's novels as in novels in general is sometimes seen in brief lines, phrases and adjectives intertwined with the narration. I would rather bypass these. But at least one critic, that is, J. W. Beach, has criticized Meredith for his "interference" in such short commentaries, by referring to a passage from *Richard Feverel* (pp. 118-19).<sup>19</sup> Therefore, before I proceed to consider the longer commentaries which are my chief subject, I shall briefly digress by indicating the narrative necessity of such interlaced commentaries by examining some of the points of Beach's disapproval of the passage. This lyrical description of nature appears in the narration of Richard advancing towards Lucy in a boat. Beach's objections are particularly directed to certain normative expressions in this description; but it can be seen that he considers these expressions mostly out of their contexts. For example, the expression, "hung a daughter of earth," implicitly compares Lucy with the flowers by echoing the previous line which is about hanging meadow-sweet; thus it visualizes her as an integral part of the beauty of Nature and contributes to her characterization. Likewise, "this blooming young person", Beach's sore point, is an imagistic and not a sentimental description that furthers this comparison with flowers. Again, "the damsel" is a very definite construction of the present, romantic point of view or Richard who is accustomed to thinking and feeling in terms of knight-errantry, and also continues the irony that has been running through the passage. All the eleven expressions objected to by Beach in the passage could be thus proved to be functional in the scene; while space forbids any such analysis (and it is unnecessary), I believe these instances serve the purpose.

I shall now proceed to examine the more conspicuous commentaries, the longer ones. One aspect of these is sometimes seen in the author's role as a social or political commentator on the background of his novels. It has to be pointed out at first that the works where Meredith does this to any noticeable extent are few in number: *Vittoria*, *Beauchamp's Career*, *Celt and Saxon*, and *One of Our Conquerors*; this indicates the remarkable restraint he put on the temptation to "lecture" on some of his pet themes. I shall concentrate on *Beauchamp's Career*, as this is where such commentaries are more prominent than elsewhere; these are comments, mixed with summaries, on the mid-nineteenth century English political background, appearing at narrative intervals. Their function, however, can be understood in the context of the particular fact that although the work has been described as a political novel,<sup>20</sup> its theme is predominantly personal. This consists in working a "tragic-comic"

response in the reader's mind to the various attempts at self-expression, made by Beauchamp, a quixotic idealist possessed, as it were, by the spirit of a mediaeval knight-errant. As the story shows, the conflict of his Radicalism with Toryism expresses the clash between his romantic impulses and reality, which is revealed alike by his non-political activities. Correspondingly, the function of the "political" commentaries is seen to be an oblique illumination of this personal theme, and in this light sometimes also of the structure of the story.

This general character of the political commentaries in *Beauchamp's Career* can be substantiated by looking at some of their *particular* functions. For instance, in the very beginning of the novel, the author gives a mock-serious summary of public reactions to the threat of a French invasion, and thereby exposes the methods of the bureaucracy and of the press for manipulating the people with a false scare (pp. 1-7). We soon learn that at the time of the threat of the invasion, Beauchamp supremely disregards public sentiment, and is so innocent of the contrived political situation that he even tosses a boyish personal challenge to the French guards (pp. 7-9). Appearing in conjunction with this fact, our superior knowledge, which is supplied by the commentary, implicitly indicates Beauchamp's immaturity and romantic temperament. Moreover, this gives a structural clue to Beauchamp's major activities later on, when he directly confronts such political methods during his Parliamentary election-campaign and strives helplessly against them (chs. XIV-XXVII). The summarizing commentary on the political situation before and during the Crimean War (pp. 36-7) performs a like function. It shows the whole nation to be manouvered by politicians into an excited support for the war, the only exception being the dissenting voice of a Radical, "a political poacher". Now, this helps us isolate the non-conformist, mass-scorning character of Beauchamp who, although he takes part in the war with a romantic gusto (e.g., pp. 41-3), opposes the national frenzy by supporting this very person (p. 38). This anticipates the central phase of his career when, in a similar fashion, he devotedly supports the Radical Dr. Shrapel against his family and against the entire community of Bevisham and the neighbouring localities (e.g., chs. XXIX-XXXVIII). Most significant among the commentaries is the abstract, quasi-Carlylean discourse on parliamentary democracy where the author makes an ironically helpless gesture of being compelled to accept the existing order in place of an "intellectual" rule (pp. 180-82): as a matter of fact, this commentary gives a positive shape to the author's attitude to politics. Primarily, the discourse is found to be relevant to the narrative purpose, transcending its political ideology, as it stimulates our

interest in Beauchamp as an individual. The question of "intellectual" rule obliquely throws light on Beauchamp's *personal* norm in life, since, for all his Radicalism, he is a Carlylean worshipper of "heroes" and, as the story shows, is romantically impatient with the parliamentary system, wanting to do the work of a thousand years in a few years. The commentary serves a dual purpose. It creates in our minds a sympathy for Beauchamp's *spirit* (underlying his politics)—implicitly criticizing the existing state of things. At the same time, it also helps us see his limitations by prescribing (though somewhat ironically) an eventual acceptance of the present system as the practical way to follow (p. 182). In this double attitude the commentary resembles the manner in which wise Tories in the novel like Seymour Austin and Stukely Culbrett point out the limitations of "Shrapnelism" and "Beauchampism", while agreeing with them in principle (e.g., pp. 415-16). Thus the commentary becomes an analogous representation of the correct perspective to Beauchamp's noble but unpractical idealism.

The commentaries on the conduct of characters, sometimes verging on "psychological analysis," and sometimes "philosophizing" on their behaviour, are the more important kind of Meredith's evaluative commentaries. If we mechanically consider Meredith as a man of his age, these commentaries could be classified with the didactic oratory of the eminent Victorians. Doubtless, these won admiration for him in his own time as wise philosophisations as they have won disapproval from some modern critics as philosophical interferences. Both ancient praise and modern criticism, however, are immaterial. What matters is that these generalizations carry on the business of the particular novels in which they appear; as I intend to show in my instances, they do this by illuminating special truths about the characters and the action, which could not be communicated in any other manner.

I shall select my examples chiefly from *The Egoist*, the novel which more than any other exposes characters in terms of their mental states. Let us take at first the commentary after the narration of Clara's recent experience of Willoughby's self-aggrandizement:

Certain is the vengeance of the young upon monotony; nothing more certain. They do not scheme it, but sameness is a poison to their systems; and vengeance is their heartier breathing, their stretch of the limbs, run in the fields: nature avenges them.  
(p. 126)

This is quite a "wise" run of statements, and we do not seek to contest the idea that "youth" has an urge for vengeance against monotony. But our chief response is not meant here to be the acceptance of an instructive



thesis on young people. What is important is that these lines help us understand the entire psychological drama of Clara *vis-à-vis* that of Willoughby. These lines apparently suggest that since Clara is suffering under the monotony of Willoughby's egoistic talk, she, being young, will take revenge on him. Actually, however, she is not *planning* anything as crude as that. As we see later on, her rejection of Willoughby is not due to any particular, external happening (the Crossjay-escapade of ch. XL only helps bring about the inevitable end); the process of rejection started long ago. That happened in ch. VII when Clara, after coming to Patterne Hall, was denied a holiday before marriage, and felt an inexplicable revulsion for Willoughby (pp. 63-5). For, in return for her expectations of comradeship, "a living and frank exchange of the best in both," she gets the chilling reward of "the mystery of the inefficient tallow-light in those caverns of the complacent talking man" (p. 65). This clash of personalities lies at the root of the comedy of *The Egoist*. Clara, no hero-worshipper like Laetitia, wants comradeship, a two-sided business; Willoughby the inveterate egoist who needs must devour the soul of his lover, can never give it to her; Clara feels this from the beginning—but is not able to explain it. The monotony repelling youth in the present commentary is not, therefore, meant to apply to *all* youth. It is an illumination of the hidden, half-conscious motivation in the mind of the *particular* young person, Clara, placed in a *particular* situation, in whom we are interested; thereby the commentary helps us understand how this will inevitably lead her to take "vengeance," that is, openly reject Willoughby. Thus, instead of driving from the particular to the general, which is the "philosophical" process, Meredith makes the generalization explain the specific.

Let us take the long commentary on Willoughby's egoism in chapter XI of the same novel, when Clara goes away after another experience of his discourse about himself. In order to fully understand the commentary, its context needs to be first explained. We have our experience of Willoughby's egoism in this chapter mostly from Clara's point of view, and at the end of her present interview with Willoughby, she finds from his gestures and words that he so much relies on "her excess of love" that he expects her to worship him "without any estimation of qualities" and so keeps on talking about himself (pp. 128-9). Here Clara approaches very much near the truth about Willoughby, but not the whole truth. Young and inexperienced, she forms a blurred vision of the man, but cannot apprehend that a subtle sensuality governs his attitude to women. The commentary completes this picture of Willoughby—as I shall now show—and also suggests the limitation of her vision. After repeating what Clara has already found out (this way a link is maintained between

the omniscient view and the earlier point of view of Clara), and telling us of Willoughby's egoistic view of women (pp. 129-30), the important part of the commentary runs as follows :

The love-season is the carnival of egoism, and it brings the touchstone to our natures. Applied to Sir Willoughby, as to thousands of males, the touchstone found him requiring to be dealt with by his betrothed as an original savage. She was required to play incessantly on the first reclaiming chord which led our ancestral satyr to the measures of the dance. To keep him in awe and hold him enchained, there are things she must never do, dare never say, must not think. She must be cloistral...Whether they [women] see that it [men's desire for "purity" in women] has its foundation in the sensual, and distinguish the ultrarefined but lineally great-grand son of the Hoof in this vast and dainty exacting appetite is uncertain...It is the palpable and material of them still which they are tempted to flourish, wherewith to invite and allay pursuit : a condition under which the spiritual .. languishes. The capaciously strong in soul among women will ultimately detect an infinite grossness in the demand for purity infinite, spotless bloom. Earlier or later they see they have been victims of the singular Egoist, have worn a mask of ignorance to be named innocent, . . . suffered themselves to be dragged ages back in playing upon the fleshly innocence of happy accident to gratify his jealous greed of possession . (pp. 130-31)

The method of the commentary, it may be noticed, generalizes Willoughby and Clara into something like Everyman and Everywoman. This generalization, however, is only a way of coming back to them individually, especially to Willoughby. This is an interesting exposition of the war of sexes, with some very strong words on the facts of life thrown in under a deceptive appearance of abstractions (e. g., "palpable and material..... tempted to flourish"). It means that women are expected to be coquettes under the guise of "purity"—and that they should comply in this—to serve the refined sensualism of men. Their greed for the possession of their mates is whetted by such "purity" and it serves the purpose of devouring male egoism. This is corroborated by the immediately following narration of an earlier episode where Willoughby, wanting to make love to Clara, was refused by her (p. 132) ; we are told that he even rejoiced at what he thought was the "purity" of the refusal, without having the least idea that it was actually out of a feeling of repulsion toward him that she had refused (*ibid.*) Thus the commentary gives us a refreshed image of Willoughby's mind through the generalised picture of egoism. It makes us

understand that the psychological basis of his egoism is a sensual, possessive greed sharpened by an expectation to be worshipped by the purest appearance of femininity—in short a desire for “fleshly innocence”.

Such generalizations are sometimes also meant to set the necessary perspective for correcting a plausible but wrong judgment of a particular character. I say “plausible”, because Meredith sometimes takes pains to show the other side of the case. This is illustrated in my third instance, taken from *Diana*. It is a commentary on Diana on the eve of her fateful meeting with Dacier, which leads to their frustrated love-affair. After telling us that Diana’s mind is athirst for freedom “to breathe, gaze, climb, grow with the grasses, fly with the clouds, to muse, to sing, to be an unclaimed self.....”, the author comments :

Bear in mind her beauty, her charm of tongue, her present state of white simplicity in fervour : was there ever so perilous a woman for the most guarded and clearest-eyed of young men to meet at early morn upon a mountain side ? (p. 173)

Taken merely as a generalized view, this commentary should mean that guarded and clear-eyed young men would lose all their defence and start an affair with beautiful, well-spoken, and freedom-loving women, and that is why Dacier is on the verge of starting an affair with Diana. But such a meaning is not warranted by the narrative. For example, even in a congenial atmosphere, Diana does not become “perilous” in this manner to the guarded and “clear-eyed” Redworth although he nourishes a passion for her (ch. IX). Instead of being the explanation of a universal truth, the statement is actually an illumination of Diana’s individual conduct in the present circumstance. Thus it acts as a corrective to a possible misunderstanding that Diana is emotionally involved with Dacier in the immediately succeeding events in the next chapter—the sort of misunderstanding that Dacier himself, in his sentimental mood, has of her “white simplicity” (e.g. pp. 187-88). The commentary thus also indicates how Diana’s heedless beauty and simplicity unwittingly exercises a magnetic pull over Dacier—a process which takes a concrete shape in the next chapter. This provides the key to her dilemmas with Dacier and with men in general, seen throughout the novel. Moreover, the commentary gives us an ironical view of the “clearest-eyed” Dacier who is found in the next chapter to be a prey to sensualism and sentimentalism which is the actual reason for Diana’s assuming a “perilous” aspect for him.

The kinds of commentary that we have seen above point to a common conclusion.<sup>21</sup> On the whole, they are necessary clues to significances implicit in the novels : while the author is “vocal” in them with his external, explicatory point of view, they function, just like situations and

characters as parts of the total narrative construction. They are not candid, undisciplined self-revelations but are verbal devices that largely render significances and meanings in an oblique manner. The functions of some other types of commentary have had to be left out for reasons of space, but they only establish the truth thus indicated by the major and recurrent types.

#### IV

Along with the other features of omniscience looked at in this essay, this functional character of the commentaries thus indicates the general truth about the author's voice in Meredith. For one thing, it signifies that in the hands of a novelist who cares about his art, the "voice" is capable of becoming a method. What is more important is the way in which Meredith handles it. He does not set about it as a matter of uninhibited right, and adjusts and modulates it according to his artistic purpose. This is where he differs from his "explicit" forerunners and peers from Fielding to George Eliot (although I do not for a moment intend to say that their "uninhibited right" is necessarily a fault). The Meredithian "voice" is not prescriptive, and is not to be equated with the booming public voice of Box Hill. Existing in its own right, it is not, however, imposed upon the narratives but fundamentally serves them. An artistic tension thus runs through it, which illustrates the interesting truth: while he follows an old convention, Meredith makes an original use of it that shows an aesthetic conscience and deliberateness not usually discovered in Victorian novelists.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Wayne Booth (*The Rhetoric of Fiction*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1961, 4th impression, 1963, pp. 15-20) and W. J. Harvey (*The Art of George Eliot*, London, Chatto & Windus, 1961, pp. 68-9) are to be particularly mentioned.

2. This is what Norman Friedman, a major exponent of the Lubbock-Beach mode of criticism, ascribes to omniscience, in his "Point of view in Fiction: The Development of a Critical Concept" *PMLA*, LXX (1955), p. 1169.

3. *Sandra Belloni*, in Memorial Edition (27 vols.) London, Constable, 1909—11, p. 484. All my subsequent referemes to Merediths texts are to this edition.

4. For some of his similar views on the novel, see e.g., *The Egoist*, pp. 132-33, *Celt and Saxon*, pp. 183, 185; *One of Our Conquerors*, p. 374; *The Westminster Review*, LXVII (April 1857) p. 611, LXVII (July 1857), p. 310, and LXVIII (October 1857) p. 601.

5. See e.g., J. W. Beach *The Twentieth Century Novel*, New York, D. Appleton-Century, 1932, p. 30 ; A. A. Mendilow, *Time and the Novel*, London, Peter Nevill, 1952, pp. 112, 222. A brief defence of Meredith's practice is seen in Phyllis Bartlett, "The Novels of George Meredith," *A Review of English Literature*, III (1962), pp. 38-43-

6. However, even this device need not be taken as so "old-fashioned," See e.g., Joyce's *Ulysses*, New York, the Modern Library, 1934 pp. 342-43.

7. Meredith ridicules this through the Philosopher's comment in *Sandra Belloni*: "still up to this day, the fixture of a nose upon the puppet-hero's frontispiece has not been attempted" (p. 111).

8. The importance can be gauged from the fact that the scenic action occupies 508 pages of the total 629 in the novel.

9. The brief panoramic ending of *the Egoist* in ten and a half lines (pp. 625-626) is hardly noticeable and without much importance.

10. Save a few, stray, brief summaries (as in p. 51 of *Lord Ormont*).

11. *Thackeray the Novelist*, London, Methuen, University Paperbacks, 1963 (first published 1954), p. 84.

12. See David Daiches, *The Novel and the Modern World*, University of Chicago Press, 1st pr. 1960, 1st phoenix ed., 1965, pp. 1-4.

13. *Richard Feverel*, *The Egoist*, *One of our conquerors*, *Lord Ormont* and *The Amazing Marriage* especially illustrate this.

14. See, e.g., *Evan Harrington*, pp. 170, 173, 176, and *Rhoda Fleming*, pp. 45-6, 69, 101, 107, 220-221.

15. There are plenty of such "intrusions" in *Sandra Belloni* too ; but they are all dramatized and not straight forwardly authorial.

16. I borrow the term from Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, p. 205.

17. E.g., moralistic stories, sentimental romances, sensational novels, naturalistic fiction, and social satire.

18. These appear to be the special occasion for Beach's mistaken classification of Meredith as a philosophical thesis-propounding novelist ; see, e.g., *The Twentieth Century Novel*, p. 38, also *The Method of Henry James*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1918. p. 24.

19. *Op. cit.*, pp. 42-4.

20. See M. E. Speare, *The Political Novel*, New York. O. U. P., 1924, pp. 237-38.

21. Some other representative instances of the functions of various types of commentary are as follows : *Richard Feverel* p. 10 (different from the one cited above), pp. 233-34, *Vittoria*, p. 80, 84-6, 460-61 ; *Beauchamp's Career*, p. 6, pp. 36-7, 38-9, 39-40, 40-1, 92-4, 103-4, 317-18, 552, 616, 624 ; *The Case of General Ople and Lady Camper*, (in Memorial edition, XXI), pp. 120, 130 ; *The Egoist*, pp. 6, 237-8, 240-41, 245, 265-96 ; *Diana*, pp. 54, 58, 74, 189, 399-400, 440-41, 448 ; *One of Our Conquerors*, pp. 10, 10-1. *The Amazing Marriage*, the last novel, provides some very characteristic instances ; but these, as in *Sandra Belloni*, are better understood in the light of the dramatizing technique of the novel.

## INTERPLAY BETWEEN IMAGE AND ACTION IN THE *AENEID*

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S. K. DAS

IT is the common experience of teachers dealing with Roman literature that the *Aeneid* presents to the average reader difficulties which could have been avoided if he could study the original Latin version. This is to a large degree because of the inadequacy of all translations. Not that the translators lack ability. Indeed, some of them are distinguished poets. But Vergil placed insuperable problems in the way of translators. His style, an essential aspect of the total epic, has not been and cannot be adequately translated.<sup>1</sup> Vergil did not produce a poem which would be a good story in itself. Anyone can enjoy the *Odyssey*, for example, whether presented in prose or verse; its power does not depend so heavily on the techniques of oral composition. When Vergil wrote the *Aeneid*, the spirit of the times and his own special talents demanded a thoroughly conscious exploitation of every relevant stylistic technique. The art of the *Aeneid* involves many technical skills, which Vergil, starting from the experiments of his predecessors, developed to near perfection. Although it is possible and important to analyse the broad themes and imagery of the epic, we inevitably miss the full power of his poem in translation; we miss the very implications of a highly conscious style.

The effectiveness of Vergil's poetry is to be sought in the power that individual metaphors and patterns of verbal similarity can infuse into a given book or even into the total epic. Therefore, the search for and analysis of his poetic design should begin with an examination of those subtle variations and repetitions of metaphor and image by which action and structure are unified. To make this point as concretely as possible, it seems necessary to select a part of the Latin original. I offer here an interpretation of the first 550 lines of the second book of the *Aeneid* as an entity held together by special verbal designs. My purpose is not to deal with technical matters such as versification and metre; rather my primary intention is to examine the poet's characteristic method of composition.

In the beginning of the second book Aeneas begins his tragic story

of the sack of Troy and as the narrative proceeds we are no longer in Carthage but confronting the enormous bulk of the wooden horse. Laocoon comes hastening furiously down from the citadel with a large number of followers to expose the fraud. But another figure suddenly appears: he is Sinon, the very personification of Greek treachery. He is the object of as much doubt to the Trojans as the horse, and equally false. His name itself with its resemblance to *sinus*, *sinuo* helps to bring out the suggestion of treachery. His lying deceives the Trojans and they believe that the horse brings the blessing of the gods upon the city. The English word *sinuous* with its suggestion of serpentine tortuosity communicates to us the sinister aspect of the name of Sinon. Sinon says:

*vincula rupi*  
*limosoque lacu per noctem obscurus in ulva*  
*delitui*

(I burst my bonds and lurked all night in a muddy  
swamp hidden in the sedge)

*Delitui* is derived from *delitescere* which is used with peculiar appropriateness to the serpent. Vergil uses the same word (*vipera delituit*) to describe the viper in *Georgics* (III.416-17). Sinon whose name itself suggests the slippery qualities of the snake is the voice of the horse. The wiles of the Greeks which Laocoon had stressed are absorbed by Sinon. One suspects that the Pelasgian guile (*arte Pelasga*, 152 and *artisue Pelasgae*, 106) by means of which Sinon gains the trust of the Trojans, is closely associated with the *divina Palladis ars*, the divine and clever craft of the goddess responsible for the making of the horse. The people crowd round the fettered Sinon just as they had approached Minerva's monster, the wooden horse. The relaxing of Sinon's bonds, ironically by the doomed Priam himself, is paralleled first in the opening of the gates of Troy. And Sinon looks around (*circumspexit*, 68), almost mimicking Laocoon's prediction that the horse would soon look down upon the very houses (*inspectura domos*, 47). Sinon's groan echoes in a sense the cry of the wounded horse and the resistance of the Trojans breaks down. The fortunes of Sinon are related closely to those of the horse and to the fate of Laocoon. And as Sinon rises Laocoon falls. The doom of Laocoon forshadowes the doom of Troy. The drama of the first segment of the book may be briefly summarized as the replacement of Laocoon by Sinon and his portentous instruments, the snakes and the horse. They constitute the symbolic triumph of Greece over Troy preceding the actual ruin.

The snakes from Tenedos where the Greeks lie in wait come and devour Laocoon and his sons ostensibly because he dared to challenge the wooden horse. Then the snakes flee to the citadel, whence Laocoon had first rushed to give his unheeded warning ; later the snakes slowly move towards the shrine of Athena, who, as we know from Aeneas's opening description, was the protectress of the horse. The horse, initially the object of skepticism and distrust, now makes triumphant entry into the city, and Vergil completes the circular course of the plot in terms of natural description, for the horse releases its deadly burden as sleep grips the Trojans.

Such a summary does not elucidate the magnificent interplay between images and action. The snakes and the horse become central images in the dialogue between Laocoon and Sinon, one seeking to expose, and the other to deceive and destroy. To clarify the design we should examine with care the pattern of imagery in this part of the narrative. Let us turn, as Aeneas does, to the wooden horse.

*Fracti bello fatisque repulsi*

*ductores Danaum, tot iam labentibus annis,  
instar montis equum divina Palladis arte  
aedificant sectaque intexunt abiete costas ;  
votum pro reditu simulant ; ea fama vagatur.  
huc delecta virum sortiti corpora furtim  
includunt caeco lateri penitusque cavernas  
ingentis uterumque armato milite complent. (Il.13-20)*

(Broken by war and driven back by fates the Danaan chiefs after the passage of so many years build with Pallas's divine art a horse of mountainous size weaving its ribs with planks of fir. They pretend it as an offering ; this rumour goes abroad. Here into its dark side they secretly hide a select body of men and fill up its huge cavern and deep belly with armed soldiery.)

Three distinct metaphors are employed here and the poet refers to them with slight variations in subsequent lines. First, the horse is an animal and possesses ribs, side and belly. Moreover, though wooden, it deceives paradoxically and is actually very much alive.<sup>2</sup> Parallels between a ship's hold and the belly of the horse have been noticed by M. C. J. Putnam.<sup>3</sup> Vergil stresses the similarity between the deadly cargo in a ship's hold and the soldiers concealed within the wooden horse. Finally, the horse is as huge as a mountain within whose dark side and cavernous interior



soldiers can be hidden with stealth. The size has been emphasized so that the wooden horse can look down upon the walls of Troy and upon the very houses of the people (*inspectura domos ventura que desuper urbi* : about to gaze into our homes and plunge upon the city from above 1.47). For reasons of its height and bulk and for the threat it poses it is *minans*, threatening (1.240).

The 'life' of the horse is perhaps the most striking ambiguity evident throughout the description. The idea of the horse as a womb is traditional, as is that of pregnancy, and is Roman as well as Greek.<sup>4</sup> The word *ingens* specially in conjunction with the word *cavernas* also has connotations of pregnancy. Vergil accentuates also the hollowness of the horse (*cavas uteri et temptare latebras* : feel the hollow hiding places of the womb, 1.38) to suggest the same ambiguity of beast, ship and mountain. In line 45 *inclusi* echoes *includunt* in line 19. Laocoon's speech (11.42-49) reveals the fraud and the uses of *latabrae* and *insidiae* are found in lines 36, 38, 55, 65 and 195.

In the hope of proving his point and exposing the fraud Laocoon plunges his spear into the body of the horse (11, 50-53).

*sic fatus validis ingentem viribus hastam  
in latus inque feri curvam compagnibus alvum  
contorsit. stetit illa tremens, uteroque recusso  
insonuere cavae gemitumque dedere cavernae.*

(So saying he hurled his spear with mighty force at the beast's side and the curved frame of the belly. There it halted quivering, and as the womb was struck the hollow cave rumbled and gave forth a groan.)

Once again the same metaphors appear ; the beast has flanks and womb ; like a cargo vessel it possesses sides, a belly and a hold. At the same time the word *latus* and *cavae cavernae* recall the deep mountainous hollow mentioned in line 19.

After the death of Laocoon the way is open for the beast's grand entry into Troy (11.234-40) :

*dividimus muros et moenia pandimus urbis.  
accingunt omnes operi pedibusque rotarum  
subiciunt lapsus et stuppea vincula collo  
intendunt. scandit fatales machina muros,  
feta armis. pueri circum innuptaeque puellae  
sacra canunt funemque manu contingere gaudent ;  
illa subit mediaeque minans inlabitur urbi.*

(We part the walls and lay open the city's battlements. All gird themselves for the task and put gliding wheels under the horse's feet and stretch hempen bands about its neck. The fateful engine climbs the walls, pregnant with arms. Around it boys and unwedded maidens chant holy songs and delight in touching the rope with their hands. It moves on and glides menacingly into the midst of the city.)

The horse glides into the city pregnant not as an ordinary animal but with the potentiality of armed might. Then under cover of darkness Sinon breaches its swollen belly to let forth the hidden Greeks. The city gates and the *latabrae* within the horse's belly have been opened. The horse glides on slippery wheels (*rotarum lapsus*) which recall the sinuous movement of the snakes. The notion of gliding and floating which the phrase suggests passes into the verb (*inlabitur* (1.240). The parallel between the huge lumbering beast and a ship is once again stressed. *Funis* could be considered a cable by which a ship is hauled or moored as well as the bridle of a horse and this has been observed already by R.G. Austin.<sup>5</sup> The verb *reddo* which the poet uses in line 260 can also be used to describe the unloading of a ship's cargo.

At this stage it would be worthwhile to examine how Vergil seems to have adopted a similar interaction of image and action to describe another moment whose intensity depends on violence either suppressed or released. It is the sea storm raised by Aeolus (in Book I) at the behest of Juno and there too, Vergil seizes upon the metaphor of horses to extend his meaning beyond the literal description. The winds roar like animals (*fremunt*, I, 56.) and Aeolus soothes their troubled spirits as a charioteer controls his horses. He curbs their strength (*premit* I, 54) and bridles them (*frenat*, I, 54). And Juno commands: (*incute vim ventis submersasque obrue puppis*, strike force into the winds and overwhelm the sinking ships, I. 69). She adds the notion of whipping to the simile. The winds seem to acquire unobtrusively the characteristics of human beings, and at the same time retain their potentiality for destruction. Vergil also compares them to a seditious mob (Book I, 11. 148-54). Vergil describes the habitat of the winds; it is a deep cavern (*vasto antro*, I, 52). Its hollowness is further implied by the phrase *feta furentibus Austris* (I, 51.) The cavern teems with furious blasts and the reader is prepared for the birth of violence very similar to the violence unleashed in the sack of Troy. Aeolus now drives his spear against the mountainside:

*Haec ubi dicta, cavum conversa cuspide montem  
impulit in latus ; ac venti, velut agmine facto,  
qua data porta, ruunt et terras turbine perflant.*

(I. 81-83)

(So he spoke and turning his spear smote the  
hollow mountain on its side ; and lo ! the winds  
as if in armed array rush forth where passage is  
given and blow in storm blasts across the world.)

Laocoon similarly had plunged his spear against the wooden horse ; and the parallels reveal a pattern Vergil's mind tended to follow when describing potential violence. And when the birth of violence finally occurs, the poet does not fail to infuse the power of the first passage into the second. The winds are metaphorically treated as steeds and the brood of the wooden horse draws, to itself the image of winds. When Aeneas realizes that ruin has befallen Troy, Vergil enlivens the scene with a simile comparing the destruction to a flame aided by raging winds and the phrase *furentibus Austris* occurs both in Book I, 51 and Book II, 304.

Besides, at the very moment when the twin sons of Atreus are first shown going about their work in Troy's flaming hell, Vergil adds another simile which equates the violence of the winds with their companion horses. (II. 414-19). If the snakes seem to symbolize the surreptitious nature of the Greeks, the horse may be said to typify their fury. The horse also possesses the quality of stealth as the poet draws for effect upon the language which accompanies Sinon and the snakes. We observe how symbol and reality become one in the virtually human purpose behind their deadly intent. In line 24 (*huc se provecti deserto in litore condunt* : hither they sail and bury themselves on the barren shore) we are told what the Greeks are doing there. The verb *condo* has a distinctly sinister character and the same word reappears at line 401 (*nota conduntur in alvo*) where the Greeks are forced to bury themselves in the horse's belly. Thus the horse also is invested with the idea of deception, and the reader has not forgotten that the snakes and the Greeks all come from Tenedos.

The snakes lurking in Tenedos take their initial revenge on the attempted revealer of the horse's deception. Laocoon who had offered a bull to Neptune is now himself the sacrificial victim. His offering in this prophetic twilight is soon expanded into the destruction of all Troy. There seems to be a clear link between the serpents, the

horse and forces on Tenedos. The word *lapsus* (I. 236 l. 225) describes the gliding motion of the snakes as it does the slippery wheels under the horse. Sinon's own characteristic too colours the words. One of the snakes wriggles its huge back (*sinuatque immensa volumine terga*. II. '208). When the Trojans see how the serpents devour Laocoon and his sons, they are frightened and the poet describes the state of their mind with a telling phrase—*insinuat pavor*, 229. Even clearer is the imagery the poet uses a few lines later to introduce Aeneas's dream of Hector.

*Tempus erat, quo prima quies mortalibus aegris  
incipit et dono divum gratissima serpit.* (II. 268-69).

(It was the hour when divinely given rest first comes  
to poor human creatures and creeps over them deliciously.)

We feel that as sleep creeps over them, it brings death in its wake. There is a touch of foreboding in the sadness of *mortalibus aegris*. Bernard M. W. Knox shows how Catullus, Ovid, and Statius have made use of the insidious nature of sleep, and how Vergil was exploiting a stock expression.<sup>6</sup>

However, the potentiality of the snake imagery is not dropped and it occurs in the episode of Androgeos introduced with vivid irony by the same phrase used to bring Laocoon to our attention: *magna comitante caterva* (lines 40 and 370). Androgeos sensed that he had slipped into the midst of the enemy: and the snake imagery makes its appearance—*sensit medios delapsus in hostis*. A little later we are reminded of another serpent, Pyrrhus who is violence personified. The time for concealment is past, so Pyrrhus's violence is open like that of the serpents that devour Laocoon and his sons. Pyrrhus kills the son before the face of the father, and the father at the altar—*natum ante ora patris, patrem qui obtruncat ad aras* (663). The parallel is stressed at the very beginning of the magnificent passage (471-75) where Pyrrhus is compared to a snake

*qualis ubi in lucem coluber mala gramina pastus*

(as when into the light comes a snake fed on poisonous  
herbs)

In the following lines the latent violence of the snake imagery bursts forth in all its brilliance. When Pyrrhus grabs Priam by the hair and pulls him toward the altar, trembling and slipping in the blood of his son, the poet invites the reader to recall the death of Laocoon. For as he offered sacrifice the twin snakes grasped in deadly embrace (*implicat* appears both in lines 215 and 552) first his sons and then himself. If

the sacrifice of Laocoon is no more than a symbolic precursor of the debacle to come, then the death of Priam at the altar announces its conclusion. And his collapse at the hands of Pyrrhus, the serpent rejuvenated, seems to Aeneas to signify Troy's final collapse.

The foregoing analysis is an attempt to examine some of the rich complexities of Vergil's images. To support it by an appeal to Vergil's intentions would be barren and perhaps irrelevant. It has been suggested<sup>7</sup> that Vergil's metaphors are clearly modelled on those of Apollonius and Homer, but unlike theirs are integrated with the whole poem by virtue of their association with *leitmotifs* that recur at pivotal moments of action. Kenneth Quinn says<sup>8</sup> that we expect of an epic a loose-knit style and a leisurely tempo. But the tempo of the *Aeneid* seems to have an urgent economy that makes us feel that every word counts and every detail forms part of a cohering density. In this imaginative integrity lies his greatest achievement.

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## MARGARET CHATTERJEE'S POETRY AND HUMANISM

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K. LAHIRI

### I. *Recognition ;*

THAT Margaret Chatterjee is widely recognised at home and abroad as a front-rank figure among contemporary Indo-Anglian poets is evident from the abundant publication of her poems in Indian and foreign magazines besides quite a number of good collections of her verse.

### II. *Range :*

Her poetry covers a wide range of subjects, a large variety of experiences, and the whole gamut of human emotions and feelings. The thematic scope of her verse extends from the trivial to the grand, from the low to the high, from the familiar and concrete to the remote and symbolic. And her imagination moves freely on space, time and personalities : from Troy to Noakhali, from Rome to Simla, from Homer and Ovid to George Sand and Bharatchandra (*Towards the Sun*).

From paying high tributes to a departed celebrity—

“Even in these non-epic times,  
Across thousands of miles  
Continent salutes continent  
As we take the last dust  
Of your feet.”

(*To Pablo Neruda*)

—She comes to write sympathetically on a trifle. Who could dream of poetry being made of shoes, each variety being invested with a distinct individuality ?—

“Tenantless shoes speak.  
Rubber-fall whisper, light pad chatter,  
Heavy boot stair-shaking shout.  
Calling-for-the-cobbler shoes,

Been-in-the-fray shoes.  
 —Where on earth's the other one ?  
 Shot right behind the trunk  
 By a zealous broom.  
 .....empty shoes  
 Wrinkled, stretched,  
 —a neat row beneath the rack."

(Shoes)

What a glorious procession !

### III. *Description : Nature and Man—*

True to the tradition of the best poetry in the East as well as in the West, Margaret Chatterjee's verse always shows a fresh response to the beauty of Nature. The natural setting of her poetry stretches quite easy over plains and hills, fields and woods, rivers and seas. Land and sea are run together in the glorions vision of a happy dawning for the world's unredeemed struggling masses :

"When the gun-fire is no more  
 And the pruning hooks  
 Come into their own,  
 The long coast-line  
 Edged with the foam  
 Of plunging seas  
 Will stretch itself  
 In ecstasy  
 And the land yearn  
 For seed."

—To Pablo Neruda

Indian flora and fauna are generously distributed through her scenes : from *neem* and *tal*, *tamarind* and *sandalwood* to the *mynah* and the tortoise, the cricket and the cat. Even in misty autumn she can think, Shelley-like, of the vernal richness of the earth's beauty and the undying fire of life pulsating within :

"You too go the same way  
 The same season of the year,  
 In an autumn which should have been  
 The richest of them all.  
 Your closed eyes know  
 The skin of the earth

Is still beautiful  
And inside the belly of it  
The purest fire."

—*Ibid*

A passing moment of life is caught casually and preserved in sharp relief :

"...Squadrons of parrots  
Streaking the sky,  
And only the feet of mynah and hoopoe,  
To brush the dew away ;  
.....  
.....a ginger cat  
And the peregrinations  
Of an important-looking dog."

—*Daylight*

She has occasionally a bestiary, a little verse on a beast, with a lesson for man. The poet's cat combines alertness with relaxation :

"Limpness seeps  
Into every paw.  
His whiskers would drop,  
If they could. He does know  
How to relax."

—*The Cat*

And the tortoise is the symbol of the complex life-process of progression and rest at the same time ; it comes so easy to the animal and is so difficult for man :

"I must not only move  
But dwell.  
Not only dwell  
But move."

—*Tortoise*

Her descriptive power is invoked with equal intensity and zest in delineation of human features, beautiful or ugly, soft or harsh. Here are two typical specimens from the two extremities of life at birth and after death, of the resplendent baby and of the burning corpse.

The description of the lovely delicate infant runs into tender, intimate detail, undoubtedly drawn from the wondering, loving observation of a freshborn mother :



“So lovely this whorl of ear,  
 This silken pelt of skin,  
 Young-scented,  
 .....  
 The palms of your hand,  
 The soles of your feet.”

—*Incarnation*

The counter-picture is that of the burning body in the funeral pyre, drawn to eerie details, yet soaked in a passionate feeling of love for life itself. Fire, that consumes the mortal remains, is conceived as a lover, the last and the best. The beloved in passion courts the lover :

“Here is my last lover,  
 The most persistent.  
 .....  
 ...the last leap  
 Of flame to flame,  
 Complete, reciprocal.  
 Let me feed the fire  
 With my body.  
 Let the flames  
 Lick me with their tongue,  
 My limbs molten,  
 My head burst  
 In a thousand  
 Fiery stars.”

—*Agni*

#### IV. *Sense Perception :*

The fusion of external Nature and human life reaches a new height through rare keenness of sense perception. Awareness of the change of seasons—winter, spring, summer—comes to her not primarily by exposure to the weather, nor conventionally through observation of the landscape and the skyscape, but also more strongly through contact with the city itself and indoor life :

“I know when it is winter  
 From the coldness of your cheeks.  
 Spring powders red the trees  
 And oil melts in the shade.  
 I know when it is Summer

For the pavement burns my feet,  
And now I know the rains have come  
From the salt taste of your skin."

The sensitiveness grows keener and the perception becomes subtler, passing from the observation of vernal colour on trees, through the burning of the naked feet on heated pavements, to the cool touch of the lover's cheeks in a wintry night and finally to the salty taste of the perspiring skin in the fevered stuffiness of tropical August.

In the feast of her poetic imagery all the senses are, as in Keats, catered severally, often simultaneously. Here is a cluster :

".....flared flamboyant  
Hibiscus in a dark garden."  
".....a patch sky  
Jacaranda blue."  
"the lapping of leaves."  
"the scent of grass"

—August 15

—eye, ear, nose, all the senses are kept open and alert.

In rare instances the appeals of the different senses are interchanged or intermingled. Her poetic mind is taken by the beauty of rhythm through every sense : rhythm in sound and rhythm in shape being exchangeable and interpenetrating :

"For loving the shape of sound,  
The *sound of shape*  
—This salutation.  
... ..  
My involutions are intricate  
As the heart of the flower ;  
This is the *curve of the wave's roar*.  
... ..  
The *ripple of ebony*  
Is a high note held,  
Hands ready to pluck the strings  
And every pause is for wind to blow.  
.....I not only *look*.  
But *listen*,  
Possessed as I am  
With *sculpted sound*.

The italics pin-point the interfusion of multi-faceted sense perceptions.

Dazed as she is by the riddle of the soul in her being, she still confesses the crowning paradox of remembering every minute feature of the splendour of the spectacle that is life. The individual sense impressions of body and form, even the most trivial and elusive ones, are not obscured in the vision of the whole :

"I remember not only the central rip  
Of the lime leaf, but the downy fringe,  
Limp in the spring sun ;  
Youth in the eyes of the aged  
Fused with the bent form and the furrowed face ;  
The proud stance of the horse  
And the sheen of his pelt ;  
The taut line of the leopard's body  
And the fury of his breath ;  
And who shall say which is essential  
And which is peripheral ?  
I have loved what I have seen and touched".

—*The Splendour of the Spectacle*

No experience, however trite or exotic, is lost en route as life is rushed through the wilderness that is modern existence, but every impression received from life is meticulously gathered up and absorbed into her poetry.

Her keen life-awareness projects itself beautifully in the neat little verse, *On Forgetting*. The best illustration of forgetting, or rather of nature fighting against the natural tendency to forget, is the search by the tongue for the lost tooth in the alveolar cavity :

"Because meaning is inconstant,  
I search the gaps with my tongue,  
... ..  
Searching where the tooth was  
And no longer is."

—*On Forgetting*

## V. Imagery :

Images in Margaret Chatterjee's poetry are always fresh and naive, sometimes unexpected. Every little poem of hers tells a story, a full

story of the eternal life-process. Oftener than not it is an episode of youth, rejuvenation, and always, in imagery, raw, warm, blood-sod.

On recovering from an illness the convalescent poet gets a new life and finds a fresh image to clothe it :

“Familiar with cock-crow situations,  
I awoke on a brand-new day,  
Sailing in seas so linen smooth  
That not a wrinkle  
Marred their tranquillity.  
The pillows snowy peaks  
On which a startled gull  
Making his way homewards  
Might alight.”

—*On Recovering from an Illness*

—a glorious sketch in a perfect frame, fresh and fitting. Often an image tends to enlarge on an epic scale with an elaborate oriental setting. The monotonous chirping of the cricket on a rural evening sounds to the poet as the dragged playing on an Indian musical instrument :

“.....the cricket  
On the neem tree,  
Steadily working at his theme  
Titillating teental tempo  
Punctillious pointillist  
Pause accelerating,  
Ustad that he is.  
Playing his shehnai.”

—*Cricket*

The comparison is not laboured but naturally suggested.

Or, the image is tenuous and rarefied :

“When I thought  
You made a sudden move  
Towards me  
... ..  
I saw the footprints of birds on the snow  
Or the foot-prints  
Of birds in the sky.”

—*Mood*

Light bird-step on drifting snow or in the intangible sky is a suitable

image for the illusory nature of a passing mood. The figure, on the poet's admission, was suggested by Gaudapada.

Associative images come easy to her mind. White puffed rice blown on the floor brings to the poet's imagination all sorts of unexpected associations through similarities of whiteness, granular shape, and scattered position—northern snow flakes, sand in the desert, and, queerest of all, cosmetic body powder : each a complete image by itself :

“New snow  
 Veers vertical  
 In north-wind country ;  
 Top layer Sahara sand  
 Ripples horizontal,  
 Tropic for miles ;  
 Fan-whipped  
 Jasmine powder  
 Blows along your body's  
 Strange geography ;  
 I listen to puffed rice  
 Small impish hands scattered  
 Big white snow  
 Ablow in a summer draught  
 Making small scudding noises  
 On the mosaic floor.”

—*Puffed Rice*

No less striking is the image, drawn from modern life, of a cuddled dog compared to the contorted figure of a chair-passenger in a vestibule train :

“Contorted like a passenger  
 In a vestibule train—  
 No position comforts ;  
 Oh the exquisite agony of it—  
 My dog and his ticks.”

—*Gyp*

—What a comparison for a neat picture !

An arresting analogy compresses the essence of a subtle experience in a simple yet memorable simile. The image of a woman in the pain of child-birth is so aptly used for the poet under divine inspiration to compose :

"So right you were to find  
Evidence of travail  
Writ large in me.  
So full I am  
That waiting is  
The sheerest agony.  
The very earth it seems  
Now groans  
In sympathy.  
What shall be born  
I can have no idea.  
These words  
That batter at the door,  
Long to take flight,  
Exhaust me utterly.  
Reluctant father that you are  
The cause of this                   o  
Strange burgeoning  
In me?"

—*Lyric : four*

Rather bold in her imagination, the poet visualizes the birth of baby Jesus in fond human terms :

"Carried for nine months  
In the heart of darkness,  
Tiny as the children we bear,  
...                   ...                   ...  
Flesh of our flesh,  
Curled as red petals  
In the tight bud of night,  
Leapt now out of chaos  
With a small cry."

—*Incarnation*

#### VI. *Concern for life :*

The alert and subtle lyricism of Margaret Chatterjee's poetry proceeds directly from her fine sensitiveness to and concern for life. There is above all the artist's detached view of life's grand march. Here is a procession of people at a busy centre of urban life :

"Old men in mufflers  
 Tread carefully  
 The slippery streets  
 .....the coalman  
 In his rags.  
 The detenue in chains  
 Being taken to the next thana ;  
 Slogans on the wall.  
 The coolie.....  
 Shoots his spit."

—Near Howrah Station

And so the caravan goes on. Ennui can not mar motion with monotony, for at every point life throws up contrasts. Beside the colourless drabness of the daily round of the toy-violin-seller in the street is juxtaposed the child-buyer's unending curiosity and unwearied experiments on the instrument. The man

"...makes his way,  
 His tune returns in spite of  
 Endless versatility.  
 No day relieves him of  
 Recurrent melody.  
 Time has no stop.  
 Yet time stands still  
 On *khoka's* ten-pice watch,  
 His tiny hand experiments  
 And on his violin  
 He makes one note."

—Violin-seller,

Behind the observer there function a mind which meditates and a heart which feels. The mystery of life presses on the contemplative mind. Standing on the verge of

"the last horizon  
 Beyond which there is no time,  
 ...  
 Beyond which there is no return,  
 ...  
 Where I shall know  
 What I have been speaking"—

—The Spring and the Spectacle

the poet looks back. Life appears to her a riddle of body and soul,

"...the impossible question  
That has been my life,  
The task of isolating the dance  
From the dancer,  
The kernel from the fruit,  
The flame from the fire."

—*The Spring and the Spectacle*

But the insolubility of the high problem does not obscure the poet's clarity of vision nor affects her healthy acceptance of life with all its imperfections of pleasure and pain.

The poet contrasts the imperfect and painful life of mortals to the divine incarnation in Jesus Christ in whom there is

"Complete union of form and matter  
Ever within and beyond, now among—  
Incomprehensible."

—*Incarnation*

But

"to us spirit is unfamiliar.

... ..

For us there is only our physical existence,  
The short-lived height of the body's pleasure  
And the longer agony of the body's pain—  
Our own imperfect incarnation.

... ..

Dwelling as we do on the plateau of the  
incomplete

And the circumstanced,  
Poised between the was and shall be."

—*Ibid.*

The feeling heart of the poet is all warm with sympathy for the poor, and is full of ire, cynical against the rich.

She writes the poetry of squalor and nuisance in the dirtiest railhead in the country. The emphasis is on the human aspect and association, essentially a poet of humanism as she is. It is not objectivism out of a morbid taste for ugliness, but objectivism issuing from an inherent love of humanity and sharp satire on mounting contrasts in modern civilisation.





From her deep concern for human predicament wells out the loud protestation of the true Christian against the high and powerful in society, while the poor and the suffering remain where they are :

“Flying high in a silver bird of steel  
You hear the shrill piping of children’s voices  
From the play-ground, the cries of beggars at the gate;  
Yours is the sky, the power and the glory  
—And the kingdom is not yet.”  
—September 3 (1939, the day World War II broke out)

This is protesting and cursing in the tone of the Hebrew prophets in the very language of the scripture.

The poet realizes the irony of writing verse on Nature’s beauty in a war-ravaged land :

“Perhaps this is no time  
To write of trees  
while men lie dead  
In places where  
The one-legged tāl  
Standing in vacant lots  
Is silent witness  
To dark deeds done ;  
... ..  
Where trees blighted by war,  
Mango and jack-fruit,  
Yet survive  
With hope of fruit  
Next year,  
While boy  
Who made a whistle of a mango-stone  
Will fly his kite no more ;  
The wind blows through  
The wintry tamarind at night  
And jackals call.”

*The Sandalwood Tree*

In the midst of ruin all round she feels a nostalgic yearning for the glory and rejuvenation of life.

Here is a genuine chip of contemporary poetry with all its zest for life to desperation, with its unbounded longing and pitiless cynicism. It is ust an echo of the pervading poignant protest against the

coexistence of luxury and poverty, of superfluity and famine, rather the note of self-reproach from one who lives easy, untouched by the fire that consumes many others. They too came to life with all their sensitiveness and went through the rich experiences of being, but were ultimately shrivelled to death ; Can the denied dead forgive the pampered living ?—

“Your eyes were speaking-keen,  
 Your fingers sensitive.  
 You knew the scent  
 Of soil after rain,  
 Sky’s cavalcade of cloud,  
 ... ..  
 Your body knew  
 The flexing strength of movement,  
 ... ..  
 Knew pain beyond bearing,  
 ... ..  
 The content of deepest sleep  
 That follows love.”

—*Ballad in the Twentieth Century*

They had experiences not simply of Nature and life but also of things, artificial and painful, forced on them :

“The goods train rumbling  
 In the dreadful night,  
 The sound of Kaddish rent the air,  
 The body that your mother bore  
 Distorted beyond recognition  
 By famine, mounds of rubble,  
 ... ..  
 And fall-out from  
 Malignant skies.”

—*Ibid*

Did the poet share their pain in grief or did she stand aloof and above, just indulging in the luxury of idle verse ?—

“When the death train passed  
   the station  
 I was the guard  
 That waved it on.  
 As your skin shrivelled

I attended wedding feasts.  
 While you lay .  
 In a common grave  
 I covered reams of paper  
 With empty words  
 Can you forgive me  
 For being alive,  
 For breathing air  
 ...                      ...                      ...  
 While you are gone ?”

—*Ibid*

Can self-reproach be more pungent ?

Her deep cynicism against the rich, who live on their ivory tower of cosy dreams far from stark reality, splutters out into powerful invectives against sham and hypocrisy of every colour—economic, political, religious

“When rich men make poverty a virtue  
 Tell them we died of hunger.  
 When people talk of toleration  
 Tell them our synagogues were smashed,  
 Our temples and churches desecrated.  
 When they talk of democracy  
 Tell them that some of us died in Spain  
 Because we cared too much.  
 You world-makers, lovers of towers and mountains,  
 Who fashion the time of day with visions,  
 Who are not put off with fine phrases—  
 We also loved the world and died in exile.  
 We have no voice left but yours...”

—*From the Abyss*

Could home truths be told simpler ?

But the poet's spirit does not give way to romantic despondency. She is convinced that the day of reckoning will dawn. Apostrophising to Neruda, who was a champion of the earth's dispossessed, she declares :

“The earth will one day rebel  
 Even if the heavens  
 Are silent now.  
 Go with the thunder  
 Of Pacific surf

In your ears.  
Louder than the sound  
Of the bullets that penetrate  
Our human skin.  
No skin contains the spirit  
Nor shall the earth's skin  
Contain the belching fire  
of destiny.

... ..  
Your destiny is part  
Of the relay race of men,  
Of those whose warm flesh  
Dies at the cold touch  
Of steel,  
Whose children die of swollen bellies,  
Who are knocked by the police,  
Sprawling on pavements,  
Who is on narrow prison beds."

—*To Pablo Neruda*

And she sees the glorious vision of the future :

"One day the human landscape  
Will be beautiful,  
The sand no longer  
Hold the rusty stain of blood.  
We pledge  
That it be so."

—*Ibid*

## THE CONCEPT OF TRAGIC KATHARSIS

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JOGESH CHANDRA BHATTACHARYA

IT IS a great paradox in this world that many things which repel us in actual life lose their unpleasantness when they are presented in literature. Drunkards are people we generally want to avoid. But Sydney Carton in *A Tale of Two Cities* remains one of the most endearing of literary creations. A murderer is a hateful creature in practical life. But do we for that reason treat Macbeth with hatred? Tragedy offers us a paradox of the same nature. We never want that our own lives should be tragic, and yet we enjoy tragedies while reading them and go to witness tragic performances on the stage and the screen. What, we ask ourselves, is the secret of their peculiar attraction for the human mind?

The same question troubled the minds of the ancient Greeks and perhaps the oldest European explanation of the paradox of Tragic pleasure is offered by the concept of Katharsis which goes as far back as Aristotle.

In Chapter 6 of his *Poetics*, Aristotle defines Tragedy as "the imitation of an action that is serious and also, as having magnitude, complete in itself; .....with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its *Catharsis* of such emotions". (op. cit., p. 35). Unfortunately for us, however, Aristotle has left the term "*Katharsis*" unexplained. In order to find its true meaning, then, we must go back to the Greek use of the word.

The Greek word "Katharos," when loosely used, gives us the sense of "clean." "Katharsis," therefore, would mean "the process of cleaning" or "purification." The tragic effect then consists in the "purification or refinement of pity and fear. It was this view of Tragedy that held the field for a very long time. In point of fact, the word is used by Aristotle unmistakably in this sense in Chapter 17 of the same book: "One must mind, however, that the episodes<sup>1</sup> are appropriate, like the fit of madness in Orestes, which led to his arrest, and the purifying,<sup>2</sup> which brought about his salvation." (of cit., p. 62). It is evident from the above quotation that the word, 'Katharsis' cannot but be taken in the sense of purification in such a context. Plato, too, in his *Dialogues* speaks of the

'initiatory Katharsis' where it cannot but mean the process of purification one must go through before being initiated into any cult. To quote Plato : "The founders of the mysteries would appear to have had a real meaning, and were not talking nonsense when they intimated in a figure long ago that he who passes unsanctified and uninitiated into the world below will lie in a slough, but that he who arrives there after initiation and purification will dwell with the Gods." (B. Jowett's translation of the *Dialogues*, Vol. II : Phaedo)

The Latin translation of the *Poetics* also has the word "Lustratio" which means cleansing or purification.

The difficulty starts when Plato in the same passage, speaks of virtue as the Katharsis of fear or pleasure : "My blessed Simmias, is there not one true coin for which all things ought to be exchanged ?—and that is wisdom ; and only in exchange for this, and in company with this, is anything truly bought or sold, whether courage or temperance or justice. And is not all true virtue the companion of wisdom, no matter what fears or pleasures or other similar goods or evils may or may not attend her ? But the virtue which is made up of these goods, when they are served from wisdom and exchanged with one another, is a shadow of virtue only, nor is there any freedom or health or truth in her ; but in the true exchange there is a purging away of all these things, and temperance, and justice, and courage, and wisdom herself are the *purgation*<sup>1</sup> of them." (Ibid). The word 'Katharsis' can only mean 'deliverance,' 'expulsion' or 'elimination' in the context. We are thus face to face with two widely divergent approaches to the function of Tragedy : the one ethical—that of purification, the other psychotherapeutic—that of deliverance. Our problem now is to discover which of these two approaches will be more in keeping with the general spirit of the *Poetics*.

In Greek medicine 'Katharsis' means 'elimination.' Aristotle must have been familiar with the meaning, for he knew all the Sciences of his time ; besides, his father was a famous court physician. Plato speaks of two sorts of 'Katharsis' : 'Katharsis' in soothsaying, and Pharmaceutical 'Katharsis' by means of irritating drugs. The latter gives us the sense of expulsion by excitement—a sort of an *Homoeopathic* process in which the feelings are first excited, and then expelled. Aristotle also seems to give us the same clue by his use of the word "wherewith." Certain passages in the last book of his *Politics* only confirm our impression all the more. Thus, he says : 'A further argument against the flute (besides the technique which it requires) is the fact that it does not express a state of character, but rather a mood of religious excitement ; and it should there-

fore be used on those occasions when the effect to be produced on the audience is *release of emotion* (Katharsis), and not instruction." (Politics: Book VIII : translation by Ernest Barker, p. 347).

To quote another passage where Aristotle speaks of music :

"Any affection which strongly moves the souls of several persons will move the souls of all, and will only differ from person to person with a difference of degree. Pity, fear, and inspiration is one to which a number of persons are particularly liable. These persons, as we can observe for ourselves, are affected by religious melodies ; and when they come under the influence of melodies which fill the soul with religious excitement they are calmed and restored as if they had undergone a medical treatment and *purgings*."

The above sentiment may be taken as an excellent answer to Plato's charge against Tragedy that it fosters weakening and unnerving by exciting the unhealthy emotions of pity and fear. Plato stopped in the initial stages of the process. Aristotle goes further to state that the emotions are stimulated only to be expelled.

Aristotle was really after a solution of the paradox of tragic pleasure. The pleasure of tragedy, as suggested by him, is the pleasure of relief from the oppressive burden of the painful emotions of pity and fear. The feelings are aroused only to be worked off. The entire process is one of expulsion by excitation. By now, this theory of expulsion is the standard explanation of 'Katharsis.'

The first record of the modern recognition that Aristotle might have meant 'expulsion' by 'Katharsis' is that of Sepulveda, a Spanish writer of the 16th century. But it is mainly to Bernays and Weil, two German scholars of the mid-nineteenth century, that we owe the modern explanation of the word. Ingram Bywater, by numerous quotations from Greek literature, succeeded in showing that Aristotle meant it.

Thus, Proclus, the last great neo-Platonist of the 5th century A.D., says, in course of a commentary on the *Republic* of Plato : "The drama has a therapeutic rather than a directly moral effect ; and the excitement it supplies is required by us at times to 'Katharsicise' certain emotions and relieve the soul of the disquietude they would cause if defrauded of the satisfaction naturally due to them."

Proclus also adds that this was Aristotle's answer to Plato's strictures on Drama. But we do not find this idea explicitly in the extant *Poetics*. It might have been there in the lost portions of the book. Bywater also quotes the first English reference to the concept of Katharsis



made by Robert Peterson while translating the *Galateo* of Casa, in 1976. Speaking of the effect of tragedy on men, Peterson says that by their weeping they are "healed of their infirmity" (i.e., susceptibility to tears).

Such, then, is the process of 'Katharsis.' We may very well sum up the process by using the lines of Coleridge in *the Garden of Boccaccio* (written of course in a different context) :

"And many a verse which to myself I sang,  
That woke the tear, yet stole away the pang."

We must, however, have a passing glance at the other side of the issue, viz., the theory of purification which presents itself in a variety of forms. Heinsius, a famous Dutch scholar of the 17th century, first started the theory of purification from excess and this view was supported by no less people than Milton and Lessing. Lessing, again sought to give it a specific shape in the light of the Aristotelian ethic. Tragedy according to him, moderates pity and fear to the mean, thus transforming them into virtues. Another school holds that the purification is really of the painful elements, by the consciousness of their artistic illusion. Yet another sets forth that pity and fear are exalted into noble forms. A fourth one again asserts that pity and fear are purified from their self-regarding element.

How, then, does the other side really stand? Lessing's conception is rather curious. Accepting moderation for the moment, what necessary connexion is there between pure and moderate pity and fear? How again is this moderation brought about? Pity and fear, it might be said, weaken us through frequent excitement, and thus they are moderated. But would it not rather create a high-strung mind? Besides, dramatic performances were not at all frequent in ancient Greece. The Greeks had only two series of them: at the times of the Great Winter and Spring Festivals of the god Dionysus. Lessing's assumption, therefore, is unhistorical, for it does not hold good of the Aristotelian theory. This is again an additional point in favour of the theory of expulsion—for expulsion by excitement can only be indulged in infrequently.

The 'purification,' with all its varied connotations, does not give us a good explanation of the paradox of tragic pleasure. It cannot also answer the charges of Plato. Moreover, it sheds no light on the word 'wherewith' in Aristotle's definition of Tragedy—and Aristotle hardly uses an unnecessary word in the *Poetics*. Finally, the acceptance of the purification theory will not tally with the general tone of Aristotle in this book. Purification is somewhat ethical, and quotations from the *Politics* have already shown us that Aristotle keeps the ethical and the therapeutic mean-

ings of the word 'Katharsis' apart. The tone and spirit of the entire *Poetics* urges us to take this word in the sense of expulsion.

Milton recognises the sense of expulsion in his discussion on : "Nor is Nature wanting in her own effects to make good his (i.e., Aristotle's) assertion ; for so, in Physic, things of melancholic hue and quality are used against melancholy, sour against sour, salt to remove salt humours."

The ultimate effect of Tragedy meant by Aristotle, is also to be found in Milton—in the last line of his *Samson Agonistes* :

"And calm of mind all passion spent."

Tragedy is worth having because it brings about this "calm of mind all passion spent."

Accepting now the theory of expulsion by excitation, what is the permanent value of the concept of 'Katharsis' as a critical theory ? In treating this theory we must take into account the two following points : the demand for a particular kind of tragic effect, and the process by which this effect is suggested to be brought about. About the process, however, there is much room for controversy. For one thing, *the overloading of pity and fear before expelling them is not quite easy to do. It is not quite easy either to visualize for ourselves that all pity and fear are eliminated from our minds at the end of a tragic show.* The objections, however, affect the process only ; they leave the tragic effect all the same. The ideal of Tragedy as Aristotle came to consider is that it should not leave us in a tumult. He was simply demanding something that was implicit in the practice of all Greek tragedies. Hellenic Art, we should always remember, was an art of serenity and repose.

It is a point we do not easily realise now-a-days, for in modern drama the final repose is lost due to our stage apparatus. The drop-curtain, for example, generally falls at the climax, when the storm is at its height, thus leaving the minds of the audience all in a surge. No attempt is made, therefore, to connect the tragic experience with our normal course of life. The Greek tragedy could not afford to end on a climax. The whole show was rounded off by a final chorus. There would inevitably be a toning down, and the final mood would always be one of serenity and repose and philosophic acceptance.

A tragedy on the Shakespearean stage also could not end on a climax. There would be dead bodies for being disposed of. Towards the close of a Shakespearean tragedy we generally have a matter-of-fact dialogue set in a much lower key. Thus the problem of transmission from the tragic storm to average life is solved to some extent.

Even in certain best examples of modern tragedy there is a distinct subsidence of tone towards the end. The *Strife* of Galsworthy actually ends on a note of silence ; the two antagonists—Anthony and Roberts—gaze at each other in mute admiration and gradually, their heads droop down in profound obsequiance to each other. To take again the *Riders to the Sea* by J. M. Synge. One catastrophe is heaped on another in the play. But, at the end, a procession of mourners come in carrying over the last dead body ; then a dialogue follows, and the heroine goes down on her knees and exclaims : “We must be satisfied.” It would, therefore, appear that this chastening down is perhaps the hall-mark of every great tragedy.

But, after all is said and done, it must be admitted that a great tragedy lifts our minds up to a higher phase, and in that sense its effect is moral, if not ethical, in the highest sense. The suggestion is implied in the very definition of tragedy by Aristotle that it deals with an action which is ‘serious’ and has ‘magnitude.’ It is the seriousness and magnitude of its interest which ‘make us go down to the fundamental mystery of the human existence apart from the surface bubbles of life constituting the day-to-day cycle of human activities. In this sense, expulsion of pity and fear also leads us to a purification and chastening down of the mind and thus the age-old conflict among scholars with regard to the exact meaning of the word ‘Katharsis’ too is resolved. As a matter of fact, Milton has taken tragedy in a highly moral sense.

## REFERENCES

1. i.e., episodes in the plot of a play.
2. ‘Katharsis’ in the original.
3. ‘Katharsis’

# THE CITY IN THE NOVELS OF DICKENS AND DOSTOEVSKY

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SUDESHNA CHAKRAVARTY

## I

IN their novels we find Dickens and Dostoevsky recording an experience that was new to their century—the experience of living in a vast rapidly expanding city, whose transformation was going on before their very eyes, signalling the end of the “natural life”, the beginning of “modernity”. A totally new reality was being created—amidst an agglomeration of people of all classes and occupations, where the old staples of life were giving way before new unnatural pressures ; where, paradoxically, one belonged to a vast community and yet remained isolated. Both writers are exploring this new reality, trying to find some cohesion and meaning in its bewildering diversity. Gradually, the London of Dickens and the Petersburg of Dostoevsky emerge as symbols of a whole way of life—of the society that created them. The city is at once subjective and objective, the synthesis of a personal vision and sensitively observed social fact. It is a method that Dostoevsky described as “fantastic realism”, Dickens as dwelling on “the romantic side of familiar things.”<sup>1</sup> We have a “fictional society” created by “the projection into the imaginary of a real world which the novelist has recorded to the best of his ability and the projection into reality of a personal myth, expressing his self-knowledge.....his notion of the material and spiritual forces whose field is the human being.”<sup>2</sup>

## II

In a letter to John Forster in 1846, written from Lausanne, Dickens declares that he finds it impossible to write when away from London, owing to “the absence of streets and numbers of figures..... The toil and labour of writing day by day without that magic lantern is immense”. The word, “magic lantern” is significant—pointing to the magical, wondrous quality of London life as he portrays it. The crowded city is a

phenomenon to which many writers have reacted with distrust and fear. Book VII of *The Prelude* shows Wordsworth's reaction to the city crowd—

“How often in the overflowing streets  
Have I gone forward with the crowd, and said  
Unto myself, the face of every one  
That passes by me is a mystery”.<sup>3</sup>

This mystery and anonymity is also present in many crowd scenes in Dickens but what is also to be noted is how often Dickens tries to penetrate this mystery, to draw closer and see the crowd not as a faceless mass but as a collection of individuals, each with his unique character. It would not be too fanciful to say that the innumerable characters in his novels are a direct reflection of the bustling crowded quality of city streets. But the impression we get is not of a faceless crowd—the characters follow each other in rapid succession, but each is scrutinised and established as an individual in his own right. Wordsworth, coming upon the blind beggar in the street with a placard on his chest to say who he is, finds

“in this label...a type  
Or emblem, of the utmost that we know.  
Both of ourselves and of the universe.”<sup>4</sup>

Dickens too reads his character externally, through speech, appearance and gestures. He cannot give us any elaborate analysis of their ideas or motives—such an omniscience is impossible in this teeming complex milieu. But he makes these external gestures indicative of the inner man. It is the kind of interest that impels him to reconstruct a man's life story from his clothes.<sup>5</sup>

Dickens' early journalism has not been given much serious attention, but it is interesting to consider the *Sketches by Boz* in attempting to understand his treatment of the city. The title is significant—*Sketches by Boz: Illustrative of the Life of Everyday People*. His attention is riveted almost exclusively on the most ordinary people—the down-and-out, the petty bourgeoisie (very similar in fact to the social position of the characters of Dostoevsky's urban novels). “Never before has been shown such enduring interest in the commonplace” remarked Gissing. It is the zest with which he describes his scenes, his eye for the astonishing variety in what to a less perceptive observer would have seemed commonplace and uniform, that give the *Sketches* an original quality. It is indeed a distinctive feature of Dickens' portrayal of city life.

Alain sees Dickens' London built up like coral from the cumulative

force of descriptions of individuals.<sup>6</sup> In the *Sketches* he does give us a swift succession of scenes of city life, each described in vivid detail. But in the later novels the city emerges as an organic unity with a distinctive character. Journalistic observation is combined with personal vision.

The image of the maze—one of Dickens' favourite images for the city—occurs in "Seven Dials."<sup>7</sup> The confusion which is here benign becomes dark and sinister in *Oliver Twist*. Oliver, fleeing from Mr. Bumble, seeks refuge in the anonymity of London. But the first person he meets in London is the Artful Dodger. The city is now a world of evil, waiting to ensnare the innocent. Beneath the veneer of polite society lies the underworld of Fagin's gang. It is a microcosm with its own rules and obligations—in many ways a parody of the world of middle-class morality. For Fagin too has a "stern morality"—their gang is referred to as a "respectable coterie."<sup>8</sup>

The nightmarish quality of the descriptions has often been noted. Fagin who is so often seen crouching over a low fire has a marked likeness to the devil. The city itself is usually seen in the dark—its streets are labyrinthine, confusing, and there is always a sense of menace. Oliver, when going back to the book-stall, finds himself trapped once again—

"Darkness had set in ; it was a low neighbourhood ; no help was near ; resistance was useless. In another moment he was dragged into a labyrinth of dark narrow courts."<sup>9</sup> Note too how the houses seem mostly derelict, tottering on the brink of collapse—indeed, they are constantly described as "dens" and "burrows," and their inhabitants seem less than human. Fagin is likened to "some loathsome reptile."<sup>10</sup> As John Baylay says—"In presenting his characters as animals, purposeful, amoral and solitary in their separate colonies, with no gregariousness or power of cohesion, he draws a terrifying imaginative indictment of what private life may be like in an open society."<sup>11</sup>

The murder of Nancy changes everything. Fagin's gang, which had been skulking and hidden for so long, comes out in the open—its name is on everybody's lips. And the divided, atomised life of the city suddenly becomes united in a great threatening mob, eager to hunt out the criminal. Ironically, the animals now change back into their human nature—for the first time Dickens enters the consciousness of Sikes and Fagin. Sikes flees into the country, but finds no escape. Like Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment* he must return to the city—if only to face the mob—"it seemed as though the whole city had poured out its population to curse him."<sup>12</sup>

*Oliver Twist* oscillates between two worlds—the nightmarish world

of the city, and the pastoral retreat of the Maylies and Mr. Brownlow—equally unreal and dream-like in quality. Where one has the intensity of nightmare, the other has the quality of wishfulfilment. The pattern is one which forms the basis of all his novels of the city. In each case he brings an isolated individual to confront the crowded city which becomes an image of modern mass society. His concern is with the possibility of finding a meaningful life within this environment. In each case the final solution is a retreat into domestic happiness—the hearth provides a citadel of refuge against the formless confusion of the city. But the possibility of such a retreat becomes more and more remote—it becomes difficult to shut off the sanctuary from the society outside. The whole plot movement of *Bleak House* and *Little Dorrit* emphasises the interconnectedness of this apparently atomised society, so that any form of isolation becomes impossible. Even in *Oliver Twist* where the Eden-idyll is so complete the other threatening world intrudes upon the pastoral retreat. The appearance of Fagin in Oliver's nightmare is startling (Oliver is often found in semi-conscious states). There is also the device of similarities and recurrences. Fagin's group forms a grotesque family with Fagin as the father-figure. Nancy, when enquiring for Oliver at the police station, parodies the emotions of a devoted sister.

In order to understand how the image of the city emerges in the later novels one must trace its development through the early works. *Nicholas Nickleby* brings to the fore another quality of urban life which in novels like *Little Dorrit* will become a mark of the urban consciousness. The Crummles troupe form the centre of the novel for nearly all the characters are involved in some form of role-playing, desperately playing up to some idealised image of themselves. It is a comic version of the self-deluding illusions in which the characters of *Little Dorrit* are encapsulated—each playing a role, refusing to recognise reality. In the early novels role-playing can even have a positive value, as when Dick Swiveller in *The Old Curiosity Shop* by casting himself in the role of knighterrant rescues the Marchioness. But this same fantasising leads to the grandiose dreams of Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment*. For Dostoevsky's city is also a dreamer's city where men seek to escape from monotony in illusion.

The private world of illusion is an indication of the isolation of the characters, making them turn inward. In *Martin Chuzzlewit* this is carried to a further extreme, and now the self becomes divided. Mrs Gamp has to project part of herself into the imagined figure of Mrs Harris, who exists solely to admire her and assure her of her worth. The shadowy

Mr. Nadgett who writes letters to 'himself belongs to "a race peculiar to the city ; who are secrets as profound to one another as they are to the rest of mankind."'<sup>13</sup> His whole life is spent probing the secrets of others—he is the first detective in Dickens.

This novel shows Dickens attempting to find some unity in the fragmented world of the city. This he partly achieves through the elaborate swindle of the Anglo-Bengalee Insurance Company which as P. N. Furbank points out,<sup>14</sup> has something of the same role as the Chancery suit of *Bleak House*. He also relies on co-incidence—as in the way Bailey is made to link Todgers's the Pecksniffs, the Anglo-Bengalee, Mrs Gamp and Poll Sweedlepipe.

But the complexity of Dickens' treatment of the city must be stressed. As an image of modern mass society—fragmentary, mechanical and alienated—it will become increasingly powerful. But he never ceases to be fascinated by the variety and multitudinousness of city life. The ambiguity of tone is seen in the famous passage describing the view from Todgers's. London is "on terms of close relationship and alliance" with Todgers's, for as a boarding-house Todgers's is a city within a city. It is set in the heart of the city—buried within "devious mazes," surrounded by tokens of decay and death. Yet the labyrinth is also utterly humanised—we note Dickens' delight in the "ancient inhabitants" of the region.<sup>15</sup> The view from Todgers's is a bewildering one. But Young Bailey has a zest for the noise and confusion for he lingers behind to walk on the parapet. And Young Bailey with his unquenchable vitality and exuberance is at the heart of the novel. Thus London can still seem to the Misses Pecksniff to be "a city in the clouds, to which they had been travelling all night up a magic beanstalk."<sup>16</sup>

This dualism continues in the subsequent novels. The city, though a human creation, has gradually come to acquire a will of its own—a force which overwhelms its inhabitants as well as animating its buildings and threatens to pervert all human values. We find him searching for some way in which the basic values of decency and goodness can be preserved in this environment. For, in this new civilization of which the city is an embodiment all normal values seem to be lost and very often the individual finds himself confronted by a totally alien society. This situation is symbolised in the figure of the lonely individual in the crowd. Thus Florence is lost in "the wild wilderness of London"....."carried onward in a stream of life.....flowing, indifferently, past marts and mansions, prisons, churches....."<sup>17</sup> The connection between Dombay and the city which forms the centre of his world is one of spirit. His



house takes on the character of its occupant—"as blank a house inside as outside."<sup>18</sup> In such an environment all normal values are inevitably distorted. Thus a baptism ceremony carries suggestions of death. Images of death intrude even in the marriage of Florence and Walter.

To Harriet Carker the travellers to London seem to pass on "to the monster roaring in the distance."<sup>19</sup> But Dickens does not merely look at the city from afar. He draws closer, showing the life in the streets. He shows us men and women actually striving to preserve their humanity, human vitality struggling to survive within the indifferent system that man himself has created. The gloom of the Dombey mansion is set against the strolling variety in the streets. Even at Paul's funeral there are the "rosy children" in the background. At the crucial moments in the Dombey household, the chorus of servants and street folk provide a background of normal humanity. A retreat from the confused city is sought in Sol Gills and Captain Cuttle, whose imaginative interest in life at sea provides them an escape from this ethos of materialism.

Indeed, in *Dombey* Dickens' vision is not so sombre. He can even contemplate a change in this way of life, embodied in the final conversion of Dombey. Such Utopian visions will become difficult to sustain—later, no compromise will be possible between individual fulfilment and the mechanical routine of urban life.

With *Bleak House* one finds for the first time a complex expression of his vision of the city as a unified whole. Superficially the world of the city may seem fragmented, but all the apparently unrelated worlds are found to be linked together. Men in this city do belong to one another—their fragmentary experiences cohere to define a whole way of life. The links between the atomised worlds may be enforced through a series of similarities. Krook is a parody of the Lord Chancellor. Miss Flite, Richard Carstone, Tom Jarndyce-Gridley, share a common fate. Jo who "don't know nothink" parodies the blindness of the fashionable world. There are also the many cases of false parents—Mrs Jellyby, Mrs Pardiggle, Lady Dedlock, Mr. Turveydrop—even the Lord High Chancellor who is a father-figure—and, side by side, the many orphans and neglected children.<sup>20</sup>

The plot serves to bring out the way people are bound together—from Lady Dedlock of Chesneywold to Jo of Tom-all Alone's. For this Dickens chooses the plot of melodrama, with its unexpected turns of fate, its sudden reversals, and its reliance on co-incidence. Co-incidences provide him with a way of bringing together the disconnected.

But all links become obscured in the crowded confused city. People become isolated, unable to come to terms with this bewilderingly vast and complex society. Hence, the fog becomes the connecting symbol for this city. The all-embracing fog of the opening chapter connects the different worlds but also obscures and mystifies. The London that the impersonal observer describes is most often shrouded in darkness and fog. The absence of natural light is an indication of the unnaturalness of this life. The flakes of soot are like snowflakes "gone into mourning for the death of the sun."<sup>21</sup> So many of the interiors are dark and gloomy. Throughout there are signs that this society is perilously close to decay. At the heart of London stands Tom-all-alone's—representing the ultimate in squalor and degradation. Its buildings are all "tottering," its inhabitants are like "vermin parasites," faceless and barely human—"a concourse of imprisoned demons."<sup>22</sup> The descriptions of Tom-all-alone's have the intensity of a nightmare. It represents the hell towards which the entire society seems to be moving. Nor can its presence be ignored, for it takes revenge for its neglect by spreading infection and disease.

The image of the individual lost in the indifferent crowd recurs. We find Jo gazing at the Cross of St. Paul's "glittering above a red and violet-tinted cloud of smoke.....the crowned confusion of the great confused city."<sup>23</sup> Esther too on her arrival in London finds the streets "in such a distracting state of confusion that I wondered how people kept their senses."<sup>24</sup>

The confusion and unnaturalness of this existence results in mystery. So many of the characters become involved in mystery and secrecy. Poor Mr. Snagsby finds himself embroiled in a mystery that he cannot understand. Others, like Tulkinghorn, Guppy, Bucket, or Mrs Snagsby, try to probe the secrets of others.

Nevertheless, the city is not totally devoid of human vitality. As in *Dombey*, we have the street chorus of Mrs Piper and Mrs Perkins and the Harmonic Meeting at Sol's Arms, forming a background of common humanity against which we see the gruesome drama of Nemo's suicide and Krook's spontaneous combustion. But the possibility of leading any meaningful life in this milieu is becoming increasingly remote. The pastoral retreat of Bleak House cannot shut itself off from the sick decaying society—after all, it is also involved in the Chancery Suit. The moribund city life intrudes through the infection that leaves Esther permanently disfigured. At the end, unlike *Dombey*, this society remains essentially unaltered.

By now the city has emerged as a symbol of a way of life. It has become a force that can stifle all individual vitality. In *Little Dorrit* the city is delineated in terms of atmosphere—a dominant mood that colours both its physical landscape and the lives of its inhabitants. Monotony is the outstanding quality of this city. Its oppressive nature is brought out in the description of a Sunday in London.<sup>25</sup> The physical reflects the spiritual—the monotony of the view corresponds to the drab monotonous lives of the citizens. The same deadening routine and monotony is seen in the description of the Merdle establishment, or the street where Miss Wade lives, where all the people in the street seem aimless, having nothing to do—like the news-sellers “announcing an extraordinary event that never happened and never would happen”.<sup>26</sup> The “dull houses” are like “places of imprisonment”.<sup>27</sup> This links up with the prison motif of the novel. But apart from the Marshalsea Prison or Mrs. Clennam’s incarceration we also notice how the image becomes symbolical of the mind. Nearly all the characters evade reality by adopting a persona which they present to the world, till they become trapped in their illusion and the role takes over. It is the same with the Dorrits, Mrs Clennam, Mrs Gowan or Mrs Merdle playing to Society.

It is also interesting that side by side with the animism which is always present in Dickens one finds also examples of the other extreme—of seeing human beings in terms of lifeless objects. It reflects his conception of people not being able to control their own lives but rather being controlled by the System, by Society, by great impersonal forces. Thus Mrs Merdle becomes the Bosom, her footmen become Powder.

However while describing *Little Dorrit* one must always be careful not to over-schematise. After all, one must never forget Dickens’ delight in the exuberance of even all manifestations of falsehood and sham—his joyous portrayal of every detail of self-deception. Nor must one overlook the positive values one finds even in this society—indications that somehow human values survive in the desolate city. There is Flora’s absurd but genuine goodness, the good will of the Plornishes.

For even in this city there is possibility for the individual of attaining happiness. Little Dorrit and Arthur can find meaning and purpose in life through their relationship. Yet the ending makes clear the precariousness of this condition—“They went down quietly into the roaring streets, inseparable and blessed ; and as they passed along.....the noisy and the eager and the arrogant and the froward and the vain fretted and chafed and made their usual uproar”.<sup>28</sup>

When we come to the last novel of the city, *Our Mutual Friend*, we find that it ends not with the usual tying up of loose ends, or with the individual who has attained salvation, but with the "Voice of Society" which has remained unchanged. Individual are only incidental to it—Eugene's conversion merely leaves an empty place at the Veneerings' dining table.

Even his complex vision of the inter-relatedness of society is breaking down under the pressure of his growing scepticism. Very little actual contact can be made between the fragmented worlds of this city. The over-riding of class barriers in the marriage of Eugene and Lizzie is incomprehensible to Society. Unity in the city can only be found through symbols like those of the river and the dust-heaps—though the physical reality of these images must not be forgotten. This society also achieves some unity through what one may describe as the principle of doubleness. One notes the numerous cases of disguise (as in John Harmon or Headstone) or duplicity (in Boffin, the Lammlers, Fledgeby). There are also reversals of natural roles. Bella calls her Pa a younger brother, Lizzie loves her brother like a son.

Thus through the novels one notes the emergence of the city as the symbol of the modern civilization of which it is the unique product—sharing its most characteristic qualities—chaotic, confused, fragmented, apparently lacking all normality or order. The problem Dickens confronts is the possibility of achieving stability in what seems a chaotic society. Even to the end he clings to his faith in the possibility of human happiness. His good characters are constantly threatened by an alienated world but they are also constantly saved and finally given shelter in an Utopia of domestic bliss. But the threats of this society become increasingly too real to be conjured away, so that the final escape becomes more and more doubtful. The novels show a progress towards disillusion. But what is also remarkable is his resistance to it—to the very last there remains a citadel of goodness persisting in the confused city he so very vividly evokes. When we come to Dostoevsky we find that this ballast has gone. Dostoevsky shares many of the elements of Dickens' vision, but can no longer find any alternative framework of values to set against the urban world. His city is even more crowded and complex, lacking all normality or proportion or community.

### III

The city forms the background of Dostoevsky's first novel and it is felt as a presence in most of his early works, culminating in *Crime and*

*Punishment.* From its presence as colouring and background in *Poor People* it gradually acquires a deeper significance till it becomes an image of the human condition. As in Dickens Dostoevsky's early journalism shows him confronted with the theme of the city, groping his way towards an attitude to it. But the difference between the *Sketches by Boz* and Dostoevsky's articles for the *Petersburg News* must be emphasised. In the *Sketches* Dickens gives us detailed descriptions of various city scenes. His interest in the city is still that of the detached journalist interested in its variety and novelty. Later in the novels, we find this social observation (in the manner of Mayhew) becoming wedded to a personal vision of urban existence. The city, originally seen purely as a physical entity, becomes apprehended in terms of its mood and atmosphere. Dostoevsky from the beginning is interested not in the various aspects of city life but rather in the effect of the city on human life. Instead of variety, he finds monotony and isolation. The focus has shifted from the crowded city street to the solitary room of the city-dweller. He pictures the citizens "sitting lazily at home," having little to do. And in order to escape from the tedium of reality men are driven to fantasy. Thus emerges the figure of the "dreamer"—a recurring figure in Dostoevsky city—what he calls "a Petersburg nightmare."<sup>29</sup> Already the city has emerged as the symbol of a whole way of life—drab and meaningless.

Yet it would be wrong to concentrate exclusively on the symbolic significance of Dostoevsky's city. His Petersburg is also firmly grounded in reality. Admittedly, his portrait of the city is a limited one, for he concentrates almost exclusively on the poor quarters and most of his characters belong to the lower middle-classes—the petty government officials, the impoverished students. But within these limits the city is vividly delineated. Petersburg emerges as a real city, so that the unnaturalness of its life is all the more emphasised.

Above all, Petersburg is a place of grinding poverty. Dostoevsky's interest in the down-and-out is made obvious by the very title of his first novel—*Poor People*. Like Mr. Golyadkin or the Underground Man, or the heroes of Gogol's *Petersburg Tales*, Makar Devushkin is a petty clerk and in his uneasy relationship with his employer and his colleagues we already have an image of the precariousness of Petersburg existence. He works hard but he is unable to save himself from being crushed by poverty.

The whole story is acted out in the Petersburg slums. At the beginning Devushkin has just moved into his new lodgings. It is worth noting how often Dostoevsky's characters search for lodgings—it underlines the rootlessness that marks urban life. They usually lived in small cramped

rooms in corners of large houses with a strange assortment of lodgers. These squalid interiors recur again and again in his city. Never does Dostoevsky dwell on the variety of city life. Rather the city is usually coloured by the despondent mood of his characters—when Devushkin goes out in the morning everything seems to have a careworn air. The trials of Devushkin and Varvara represent the struggle for existence in a hostile environment. City life has become marked by its isolation and crushing poverty.

The mood becomes even more sombre in the nightmarish story *The Double*, that strange "Poem of St. Petersburg." And with it emerges the figure of the dreamer as a typical urban figure. The city is a strangely unreal place where events often seem to be happening as in a dream, where distinctions between fantasy and reality break down.<sup>30</sup> In the opening chapter Mr. Golyadkin is described as "a man who is not yet quite sure.....whether what is happening around him is real and actual and not the continuation of his disordered dreams."<sup>31</sup> The whole action hinges on the precarious distinction between dream and reality—one is never sure whether the Double is real or a product of Mr. Golyadkin's diseased imagination.

No other story perhaps has so nightmarish an atmosphere. A sense of mystery hovers over the whole novel. Mr. Golyadkin, we learn from his visit to the doctor, is tormented by a sense of being threatened—we are never told who his persecutors are. The confusions of his mind become transferred to his environment. The Double who menaces him is also himself—the deeper and more sinister side of his own mind. Reality and illusion interpenetrate. The descriptive passages have a strange dream-like quality, as in the scene where Mr. Golyadkin first meets his Double. It is a night of wind and rain. The wind and rain are a projection of the turmoil in Golyadkin's mind—outer and inner are in consonance. The sombre atmosphere breeds monstrous visions. Just before he sees his double he hears flood warnings. Svidrigaylov too imagines he hears flood warnings before his suicide. One thinks of the flood in Pushkin's *The Bronze Horseman*. It is a symbol of chaos, of the breakdown of normality.

*The Double* is possibly the most extreme representation of the strangeness and mystery of city life. Its gloomy atmosphere mirrors the "cloud of mystery and obscurity" which seems to "envelop" Golyadkin.<sup>32</sup> Events occur suddenly, inexplicably. And this mystery becomes an extension of the strangeness in the mind of the hero himself.

Gradually therefore we find that the mystery of city life is turned inward and becomes the reflection of the inscrutability of man's mind. The individual becomes the ultimate repository of the strangeness and mystery of this environment. *Notes from the Underground* carries this exploration even further. The Underground Man—again a petty official suffering from the ridicule of his colleagues, leading a typically isolated existence in his tiny room—becomes representative of the general Petersburg condition. In his Introduction, Dostoevsky remarks "If we take into consideration the conditions that have so shaped our society, people like the writer not only may, but must exist in that society".<sup>33</sup> The Underground Man belongs to Petersburg, "the most abstract and most intentional city in the world". Founded by a mere whim, on inhospitable ground, this unnatural city becomes the embodiment of the unnatural life that it harbours. The "abstract city" cut off from all natural processes of life finds its true reflection in the unnatural life of its anti-hero, living in his private world of dreams and ideas, cut off from any vital life.

Overwhelmed by the ennui of city life, the Underground Man is inevitably driven to dreaming .... "I invented a life so that I should at any rate *live*". He has illusions of grandeur—he is tormented by dreams that he can neither disavow nor realise. Periodically he craves to break out into reality—"I was not in a position to dream for more than three months at a time, and I began to feel an irresistible urge to plunge into society".<sup>34</sup> Yet the only society available is that of a few vulgar acquaintances. His dreams are indeed loftier than the sordid reality. This oscillation between reality and illusion condemns him to perpetual vacillation. He is trapped by his environment and the self-tormenting contradictory impulses of his nature. Ultimately he is unable to follow the path of redemption offered by the saintly prostitute Lisa, a precursor of Sonya. Yet his cry of anguish is heartfelt—"They give me no.....I'm incapable of being.....good".<sup>35</sup> The "they" are at once his dreamer's condition, bound to be disappointed; his neurotic craving to be humiliated; and the sordid and vulgar reality in which he remains trapped.

The Underground Man is undoubtedly an extreme case but he loses none of his representativeness for that..... "After all I have only carried to a logical conclusion in my life what you yourselves didn't dare take more than half-way....."<sup>36</sup> From this isolated dreamer who tortures himself with his own perversities it is but a logical step to another solitary dreamer who, also cut off from outside life, will breed monstrous ideas

which he will try to realise in action. What is already emerging as the image of a metaphysical condition will be further elaborated in *Crime and Punishment*, Dostoevsky's most elaborate exploration of city life.<sup>37</sup>

One notes how with Dostoevsky the city which started as background evolves into a symbol of modern existence. Yet to say that in Dostoevsky the physical city becomes the city of the mind would not be true. Petersburg in *Crime and Punishment* is also very much a real city. Dostoevsky's original plan was to write a social novel on the theme of *The Drunkards*, dealing with the topical issues of drunkenness and prostitution. The social realistic core of the novel must not be overlooked. But we note how the concrete objective details are used to create an atmosphere, an emotional tonality corresponding to the mood of the inhabitants of the city (in the manner of the later Dickens). A few motifs recur, the hot stifling crowded streets, the pubs full of drunks, and, indoors, the tiny cramped rooms and dark narrow staircases. They create an atmosphere which becomes a mirror image of Raskolnikov's spiritual condition. The same atmosphere carries over in Raskolnikov's dreams (for he too is a dreamer). The real city has an unreal quality which makes it barely distinguishable from the dream city. In contrast to the parched and stifling atmosphere of the city which we see through Raskolnikov's consciousness we have the chaos and rain of the "Spiritual landscape" evoked in the description of Svidrigaylov's last night before his suicide. His vision of chaos corresponds to the turmoil in his mind ..... "By morning the streets in the low-lying parts of the town will be flooded, the basement and cellars will be under water, the drowned rats will be floating on the surface and in the wind and rain people, cursing and soaked to the skin, will start moving their rubbish to the upper floors....."<sup>38</sup>

The interiors also have a distinct atmosphere. Here again one finds recurrent images—the dark narrow, dirty staircases, and the cramped tiny rooms where the characters lead their solitary existences. The tiny interiors become symbolic of their spiritual condition, reminding us of Dickens' houses which so often take on the characters of their occupants. But what is different here is the uniformity of atmosphere. All the rooms are equally tiny, cramped, claustrophobic. Raskolnikov's tiny cramped room is a mark of his isolation—"He had withdrawn from the world completely, like a tortoise into its shell".<sup>39</sup> Later in fact he admits to Sonya that his room influenced his mind—"I sat skulking in my room like a spider.....Do you realise.....that low ceilings and small, poky



little rooms warp both mind and soul?"<sup>40</sup> The room Svidrigaylov takes in the hotel is also small and low with a dirty bed.

The tiny rooms with their trapped inhabitants become symbols of the lives people lead in this unnatural city. Life can hardly be normal in such a setting. To Svidrigaylov Petersburg is "a city of semi-lunatics" where "so many strange, harsh and gloomy things exert an influence on a man's mind".<sup>41</sup> Dangerously cut off from normality, people indulge in fantasies and dreams. Both Raskolnikov and Svidrigaylov have dreams—even Sonia sees ghosts. Raskolnikov has been "amusing (himself) by indulging in fantastic dreams". At the beginning he "merely excited himself by their hideous but fascinating authenticity"; but gradually "he had unconsciously got accustomed to looking on his 'hideous' dream as a practical proposition."<sup>42</sup> The boundary between reality and fantasy is becoming precarious. At moments he is not sure if he is acting consciously. Note how when Svidrigaylov first appears he seems to Raskolnikov to be a continuation of his dream. And indeed, through his crime Raskolnikov is attempting to translate his fantasy into reality—to realise his own image of himself as a Napoleon, towering over the mediocre masses.

The unnatural city, the isolation, the vivid dreams—all lead to Raskolnikov's crime. Yet one cannot analyse his crime as the product of social factors in the manner of a naturalistic novel. Dostoevsky's notebooks show his increasing uncertainty above his hero's real motives for the murder of the two women. Raskolnikov's motives are never fully clarified. Dostoevsky's characters refuse to be resolved into easy, graspable formulæ, for to him the mind of man becomes the ultimate repository of all the chaos and mystery of life as it is defined by the city. With its rootlessness, its fragmentariness; its absence of all conventional norms, its squalor and sordidness, its loneliness and yet its stifling crowds, the chaotic city becomes a symbol of the chaotic mind of man. Dostoevsky not only shows us the lives of men as they are shaped by urban life, but he also raises the metaphysical question of the possibility of any meaningful life in such a milieu. Raskolnikov acts guided by his intellectual theories, which have no relevance to life as it is actually lived by people. But he cannot ignore the other part of his nature. Despite his isolation, he still belongs to a community and he cannot forget that his crime is a crime against life. He is repeatedly dismayed by the disparity between the visions of himself as created by his theories, and his actual promptings and misgivings—for he is still obstinately aware of being joined to other men by feelings of brotherhood. It is this "human"

side of his nature that points to his redemption. The contradictions in his own nature become mirrored in the contrasts in city life. The streets are always stifling, crowded and oppressive. Yet life is here in these streets, and it is here that Raskolnikov is able to forge some kind of contact with others. He is prompted by an obscure feeling to communicate with the passers-by. Very often his efforts are repulsed and he feels that "the whole world was dead and indifferent—dead to him, and to him alone".<sup>43</sup> Yet in the streets he is prompted to give money to the beggar woman and the prostitute Duklida or to rescue the drunk and seduced girl from her pursuer (though characteristically, immediately afterwards he lapses into indifference). He helps the Marmeladov family unstintingly and in the affection of little Polya he even finds a sense of brotherhood—"Enough! .....No more delusions.....Life is real! Haven't I lived just now?"<sup>44</sup> And finally, "overcome by an uncontrollable impulse" he kneels down in the middle of the square and "kisses the filthy earth with joy and rapture".<sup>45</sup> As in the memorable scene where he had kissed Sonya's feet, this is an act of homage to all humanity. Yet, characteristically, even at this moment he is jeered by the passers-by.

For all its squalor, the city represents the true reality for Raskolnikov. He must learn to come to terms with it. It is impossible to try to escape. When he escapes into the country, "the lonelier the place the more strongly did he become aware of some close and alarming presence, a presence that did not so much inspire him with fear as get on his nerves, and he hurried back to town, mingled with the crowds, went into restaurants and pubs.....there he seemed to feel more at ease and even more solitary".<sup>46</sup> Magnificence and splendour seem incongruous in this city—it is in its very squalor that the essence of city life is to be found. The splendour of the view from the Neva at sunset leaves him troubled—"This gorgeous sight filled him with blank despair".<sup>47</sup>

Raskolnikov's response to the city is ambivalent in tone, and through him Dostoevsky keeps our own attitude open. The shifts in tone do not allow us to settle in any fixed response to city life.

It is the same kind of complexity that we noted in Dickens' response to the city. In both urban life, chaotic and unnatural, still somehow manages to retain a spark of human vitality. The city, with its contradictions and complexities, becomes symbolic of modern existence. It is thus appropriate that both novelists use the grotesque in their portrayal of city life. For, as Victor Hugo realised, "it is from the fruitful union of the grotesque with the sublime, that the modern spirit

is born—so complex, so various in its forms, so inexhaustible in its creations, and quite opposed, in so being to the uniform simplicity of the classical spirit”.<sup>48</sup> One can cite numerous examples of Dickens’ use of the grotesque—as for example in the picture of Mr. Merdle going to commit suicide and seeming to leap and waltz and gyrate “as if he were possessed of several devils”.<sup>49</sup> Dostoevsky in his use of the grotesque is obviously influenced by Gogol’s Petersburg Tales. But Gogol’s ballast is dropped so that the grotesque is placed in a new perspective. What in Gogol would have been merely absurd becomes tragic in Dostoevsky. Taking a situation and highlighting its absurdities, he at the same time draws us in and involves us emotionally, so that we are left hovering between ridicule and sympathy. Even in his first novel one finds instances of this use of the grotesque—in the funeral of Pekrovsky in *Poor People* where his father runs after the coffin, his clothes flying in the wind, books falling out of his pocket. In *Crime and Punishment* one has Svidrigaylov’s vision of eternity as a bath-house full of spiders or the absurdity of his suicide before the Jew “Achilles” with his caricatured language. Dostoevsky’s use of the grotesque culminates in his treatment of the Marmeladovs—the absurd funeral supper with the squabbles between Mrs Marmeladov and her landlady, or the scene where Mrs Marmaladov rushes out into the street with her children. To quote George Gibian, “the grotesque brings a murky twilight atmosphere, blending the real and unreal, the nocturnal and diurnal so that at times we are not quite certain whether something is really happening or being dreamt.....The atmosphere is such that anything seems possible”.<sup>50</sup>

Thus the city becomes a dim twilight world, revealed in flashes at climactic moments rather than by detailed exposition. Like Dickens, Dostoevsky adopts the framework of the detective story. With its sudden revelations and its unexpected turns of plot, the detective story becomes an apt vehicle for describing the strangeness and mystery of city life. He also shares Dickens’ increasing concern with crime, especially murder and death. For the unnatural conditions imposed by city life and the equally unnatural intellectual life that it fosters, makes it the perfect theatre for crime.

But ultimately in Dostoevsky the individual becomes the repository of all the strangeness and mystery. The individual mind is as much of an enigma as the city he inhabits—as full of contradictions, eccentricities, even monstrosities. The city which he has been exploring in most of his early works finally emerges in *Crime and Punishment* as the symbol

of what is in many ways a peculiarly modern existence—rootless, incoherent, even absurd. The problem his heroes confront is the problem of finding some kind of meaning in a world that has lost most of its old norms and standards—in the “most abstract” and gloomiest cit in the world.

#### IV

It would be fruitless to look for direct parallels between Dickens and Dostoevsky. One would then have to regard the relatively minor work, *The Insulted and Injured*, with its obvious similarities with *The Old Curiosity Shop*, as the most Dickensian of Dostoevsky's novels. Although Dostoevsky was a great admirer of the early Dickens, there is little evidence that he was familiar with the later novels, where Dickens' treatment of the city most nearly approximated his own. Clearly, this is a case not of tangible influence but rather of spiritual affinity. Each discovered in his own way a specifically modern experience—the experience of living in a great city. Most previous literary treatments of the city had been devoted to a cataloguing and description of its various sights and people. Now we find a synthesis of observed social fact with a subjective vision of city life. They thereby evolve a form to express their vision of urban existence, of the struggle for a purposeful life in the wilderness of the city. Ultimately the problem of urban life becomes for both a moral and metaphysical problem—a problem of the quality and purposiveness of life in an increasingly alienated society.

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18. *ibid*—Pg. 22.
19. *ibid*—Pg. 480.
20. In a speech to the Society of Dorset Men in London Hardy talks of the "sense of loss" felt "not only by the Dorset mothers, but by those of every other country, at the time of their youthful sons' plunge into the City alone". (*Thomas Hardy's Personal Writings*—ed. H. Orel, 1966—Pg. 75). The association of the city with a life devoid of maternal affection is significant—it can be connected with the numerous orphans in Victorian fiction left to fend for themselves in an estranging urban world.
21. *Bleak House* (Oxford University Press, 1948)—Pg. 1.
22. *ibid*—Pg. 314.
23. *ibid*—Pg. 271.
24. *ibid*—Pg. 28.
25. *Little Dorrit* (Oxford University Press, 1953)—Pgs. 28-31.
26. *ibid*—Pg. 325.
27. *ibid*—Pg. 30.
28. *ibid*—Pg. 826.
29. *Dostoevsky's Occasional Writings* translated by David Magarshack—(Vision Press, 1963), Pg. 29, 35.
30. The hero of Gogol's short story *Diary of a Madman*, another petty clerk, also tries to escape from his sordid reality through his grandiose dreams—here too the actual and the illusory become indistinguishable.
31. The Double—in "*The Double and Notes from the Underground*" translated by Jessie Coulson (Penguin, 1972)—pg. 127.
32. *ibid*—Pg. 225.
33. *Notes from the Underground*—Op. cit.—Pg. 13.
34. *ibid*—Pg. 60-61.
35. *ibid*—Pg. 117.
36. *ibid*—Pg. 123.
37. After this the theme of the city dwindles in importance. The evocation of Petersburg in *A Raw Youth* lacks the same intensity, nor do the Petersburg settings in *The Idiot* have the same symbolic significance.
38. *Crime and Punishment*—translated by David Magarshack (Penguin, 1966)—Pg. 519.
39. *ibid*—Pg. 49.
40. *ibid*—Pg. 430.

41. *ibid*—Pg. 478-9.
42. *ibid*—Pg. 22.
43. *ibid*—Pg. 194.
44. *ibid*—Pg. 208.
45. *ibid*—Pg. 537.
46. *ibid*—Pg. 452-3.
47. *ibid*—Pg. 132.
48. *Preface de Cromwell*—ed. M. Souriau (Paris)—Pg. 195—quoted by Fanger—*op. cit.*—Pg. 229.
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## SHELLEY AND THE ROMANTIC MILLENNIUM

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R. K. SEN

THE generally accepted attitude to Shelley has been summed up by Merryn Williams in her Introduction to *Revolutions*<sup>1</sup> (1775-1830) "Shelley was the most overtly 'political' poet of his generation, although Byron had championed the Greek rebels and the Nottingham weavers and Keats—it is not widely enough recognised—was a very serious and consistent radical. But Shelley, ever since he had been sent down from Oxford for writing *The Necessity of Atheism* had identified himself passionately with the revolutionary cause in every way possible, both as a poet and as a man. Poems like the *Masque of Anarchy* and *Men of England* are a passionate appeal to the people of England to rise in revolt."<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately the texts cited by Williams are comparatively less important than the poems, listed as his major work by Carlos Baker.<sup>3</sup> A more balanced defence of Shelley is by Donald H. Reiman in his preface to *Triumph of Life*. "The same barriers have kept readers and critics from seeing Shelley plain from the time his first poems were published to the present and that the difficulty of "*The Triumph*" was intimately related to the course of Shelley's reputation. The barriers that tend to obscure the achievement of every artist and every thinker.....are : first, unnatural piety : second, literary fundamentalism ; third, critical ignorance ; and fourth, the fallible editor and typesetter."<sup>4</sup> Literary fundamentalism, according to Reiman, "ignores the personae to whom the poet gives individual speeches in dramas or dramatic dialogues... ..Of the fundamentalists, the worst were the biographical critics who, ignoring both, the literary tradition out of which Shelley's art grew and the intellectual, ethical, social and aesthetic preoccupations of his prose and even his personal letters, tried to read Shelley's poetry as lightly disguised autobiography..... There are, of course personal elements in many of the poems he did publish or (like "*Julian and Maddalo*"), desired to have published, but as in the works of Dante and Milton the two great guiding spirits of his mature art, Shelley's published work always go beyond the personal dilemma to the problems of mankind, the persona of the poet becoming merely the type of the imaginative human soul."<sup>5</sup> How does Shelley who "had identified himself passionately with the revolutionary cause in every way possible "succeed in putting on the persona,—the mark,



has not been understood, far less analysed, either by the older or the younger generation of critics.

## II

Earl R. Wasserman in discussing Shelley's last poetics writes of his "Defence of Poetry," "The essay is valuable, we are usually told, primarily for its breathless rhetoric : disconcertingly eclectic, it does not (or could not possibly) reconcile its Platonism with its psychological empiricism ; by attributing creation to inspiration it becomes a defence of automatic writing ; by depending upon a single norm it collapses all arts and all poems into one and destroys the distinction between the making of poems and other superior mental pursuits ; it offers unreconciled definitions of the imagination ; it provides no viable poetics for the practical critic."<sup>6</sup> Faced with such contradictions and inconsistencies, Wasserman adds that his purpose, even though 'perverse,' "is to consider what soundness and coherence the essay may yield to a deliberately sympathetic hearing."<sup>7</sup>

Wasserman discovers the 'coherence' in Shelley's Platonism as understood by him. "It would be well, therefore, to determine the sense in which the essay is 'Platonistic,' lest we impose an extraneous Platonism on it. Throughout most of his career Shelley maintained faith in the One, the ultimate reality and absolute perfection, understood in partial contexts as the True, or the Good, or the Beautiful ; and especially in 1816-17, he reportedly wrote of it as a transcendent "Power," not inert like Plato's realm of Ideas, but dynamic like Platonic Demiurge acting *ab extra* on both nature and the human mind, and imparting form to the formless, but able to exert itself only inconstantly within the sphere of mutability. As Shelley was later to write, although it cannot be entertained, delayed or hidden by earthly forms, it makes everything "divine" when "for a moment" it is not "forbidden" by the mutability of its media, "to live within the life it bestows."

As already noted, Shelleyan One, according to Wasserman approximates to Platonic Demiurge, and *not* to the Platonic Idea. This is a distinction without a difference. Wasserman draws the distinction between a "transcendent" power and "dynamic" power and locates Shelleyan One not in the "transcendent" but in "dynamic" power. Etienne Gilson's analysis of the Platonic Good and its relation to Christian God will not bear out this contention. "The *Timaeus* (28c) represents a considerable effort to rise to the idea of a god who shall be the cause and father of the

universe ; but no matter how great this god may be supposed to be he has rivals in the intelligible order of Ideas, and is moreover comparable with all the members of the whole vast family of Platonic gods. He does not exclude the sidereal gods, whose author he is (Timaeus 41 a-c), nor even the divine character of the world he fashions ; first among the gods he is but one among them nevertheless, and if, in virtue of that primacy, the Demiurge of the Timaeus has been represented as "almost analogous to the Christian God,"<sup>8</sup> we must say at once that a nuance of this kind is not allowable here. Either there is one God or there are many, and a god who is "almost analogous" to the Christian God is not the Christian God at all."<sup>9</sup> Shelley's "Defence of Poetry" was not written before 1820-21, in answer to Peacock's half-serious attack on Poetry, "The Four Ages of Poetry" which came out in Oller's Literary Miscellany of 1820. "The Defence is as dogmatic in tone as Peacock's attack, though in his letters to Peacock Shelley treated the matter jokingly," writes King-Hale. He goes on and traces Shelley's views on Poetry to Plato. "Shelley's views on Poetry derive from Plato, or rather one of Plato's two divergent theories. In the Republic Poets and Painters are disparaged because they imitate life and so are one step further from the divine ideal which life itself imitates. But in the dialogues on poetic inspiration, particularly the *Ion*, which Shelley was reading when Peacock's essay reached him and translated during 1821, and the *Phaedrus*, which he read in 1820, Plato suggests poets are possessed by a divine madness and in their moments of inspiration are the God's interpreters. Shelley takes over this later argument."<sup>10</sup> Any careful Platonist knows that Plato's attitude to poetry in the earlier *Ion* and *Phaedrus* is essentially compatible with his later attitude in either *The Republic* or *The Laws*. Shelley was far too good a student of Plato not to have known it. Shelleyan Platonism as interpreted by King-Hale or more recently by Wasserman, is difficult to defend. In other words, Shelley's poetry must be interpreted from a non-Platonic standpoint. His mature interest in Dante and Milton might provide the clue to a consistent theory of poetry.

### III

An excursus into Shelley's religious beliefs is called for a correct understanding of Shelley's attitude to poetry. Shelley and Hogg had put together some notes, querying the existence of God. These notes Shelley did edit, and "before he returned to Oxford towards the end of January 1811, the notorious pamphlet *The Necessity of Atheism* was printed at

Worthing. The argument as summarised by King Hale, is as follows. "There are three sources for belief in a Deity : the direct evidence of the senses, the decision formed after applying reason to one's experience, and the testimony of others, provided this is not contrary to reason. From these premises and the axiom that belief is not an act of volition," it is deduced that "there is no proof of the existence of a Deity," and that "no degree of criminality is attachable to disbelief."<sup>11</sup> In May, 1811 Shelley asserted that he had once been "an enthusiastic Deist," but had rejected natural religion 'from reason.'<sup>12</sup> If this be Shelley's attitude to Christianity in 1810-11, his beliefs had not substantially changed when he came to write *The Defence* in 1821. Shelley has been interpreted as a Deist. Baker's text is a letter Shelley sent Hogg on December 8, 1810. "I may not be able to adduce proofs, but I think that the leaf of a tree, the meanest insect on which we trample, are in themselves arguments more conclusive than any which can be adduced that some vast intellect animates Infinity..... I confess that I think Pope's "all are but parts of one tremendous whole" something more than poetry : it has ever been my favourite theory."<sup>13</sup> Shelley's reliance on Pope is hardly an argument in defence of Shelley's Deism, but has important bearing on his general attitude to poetry.

The acceptance of Dryden<sup>14</sup> and Pope as models of a romantic theory of poetry, introduces questions, not answered by a traditional exposition of Shelley's attitude, but inevitably falls into Pseudo-Platonism as a basis of Shelley's poetry. "In the *Defence of Poetry* reason is given small place. It is a mere mechanical process, which must wait upon imagination. Reason has to do with the relations which one thought bears to another ; imagination is mind acting upon those thoughts as to colour them with its own light, and comparing from them as from elements, other thoughts each containing within itself the principle of its own integrity." Reason is the enumeration of quantities already known, it is analytic ; imagination is the perception of values, it is synthetic. A reaction against the psychology of Locke appears in the comparisons between man and the lyre. The impressions driven over the mind, both from without and from within, produce ever-changing melody, as the wind does in the strings of the lyre, but there is a synthetic power within the mind which the lyre does not have, a power of accommodation among those impressions, and a power of adjustment to their external source. The result is not melody merely, but harmony also. With this process reason apparently has nothing to do. In fact Shelley inclines strongly to the Greek idea of poetic madness—that one cannot make poetry until he has divested, himself of reason."<sup>15</sup> This is unabashed Platonism. But Solve is in good company with great A.C.

Bradley.”<sup>16</sup> “It is of the first importance for the understanding of this unity in life ; it is one of his platonic traits. The Intellectual Beauty of his Hymn is absolutely the same thing as the Liberty of his Ode, the “Great spirit” of Love that he invokes to bring freedom to Naples, the One which in Adonais he contrasts with the Many, the spirit of Nature of Queen Mab, and the Vision of Alastor and Epipsychidion. The skylark of the famous stanzas is free from our sorrows, not because it is below them, but because as an embodiment of that Perfection, it knows the rapture of love without its satiety, and understands death as we cannot. The voice of the mountain, of a whole nation could hear it with the poet’s ear, would “repeal large codes of fraud and woe” ; it is the same voice as the reformer’s and the martyrs. And in the far-off day when the “plastic stress” of this power has mastered the last resistance and is all in all, outward nature, which now suffers with man, will be redeemed with him, and man, in becoming politically free, will become also the perfect lover.....When we turn to the Defence of Poetry we meet substantially the same view. There is indeed a certain change ; for Shelley is now philosophising and writing prose, and he wishes not to sing from the mid-sky, but for a while at least, to argue with his friend on the earth.”<sup>17</sup> It is always interesting when at rare moments, the great Professor turns witty. But unfortunately his exuberance has misled him completely. “Hence at first we hear nothing of that perfect power at the heart of things, and poetry is considered as a creation rather a revelation. But for Shelley we soon discover, this would be a false antithesis. The poet creates, but this creation is no more fancy of his ; it represents those forms which are common to universal nature and existence.”<sup>18</sup> and a poem is the very image of life expressed in its external truth. The criteria of excellence chosen by Shelley are nature, existence and eternal truth. It is needless to point out that these three, at least the first two, are non-Platonic. What Shelley demands is that poetic creation (=form) is conditioned by nature, existence and truth ; but Platonic form is unconditioned by any of these ; it is conditioned by intellectualism.

The above analysis of the critical positions of Bradley, Solve and Wasserman will clearly point out that advocates of Shelley’s Platonism with reference to his theory of poetry have still a large following. In between Bradley’s Oxford Lectures (1904) and Solve’s Shelley : His Theory of Poetry (1927), there is the standard defence of Shelley’s Platonism by Miss Winstanley<sup>19</sup>. Solve’s defence of Shelley’s Platonism has

found an eloquent advocate in modern times in M.H. Abrams. He characterizes Shelley's aesthetics as Romantic Platonism. "Shelley happened to be reading Plato's *Ion* when he received Peacock's article, and had only recently translated the *Symposium*, as well as portions of some others of the more mythic dialogues. There is more of Plato in the "Defence" than in any earlier piece of English criticism, even though it is Plato who has obviously been seen through a vista of Neo-Platonic and Renaissance commentators and interpreters. But Shelley was also familiar with the poetic theory of Wordsworth and other contemporaries. For a Summary of the Platonic echoes in Shelley's "Defence", Abrams refers to Notopoulos' "Platonism of Shelley". It may be pointed out that Barrell has questioned the thesis of Notopoulos<sup>21</sup> and has gone back to Gingerich<sup>22</sup>. "Shelley's essay demonstrates, in its most uncompromising form, the tendency of a Platonic aesthetic to cancel differences, by reducing everything to a single class, and by subjecting this class to a single standard of judgement.....these several values in turn, are ultimately the attributes of a single Form or Forms; and Shelley goes beyond Plato and approximates Plotinus, for whom all considerations had been drawn irresistibly into the vortex of the One. "A poet", as Shelley puts it, "participates in the external, the infinite and the one."<sup>23</sup> But, a little later, this ardent advocate of Shelley's Platonism, Abrams changes his position. "We can also make our way through the "Defence of Poetry" on another level of discussion: and on which Shelley comes closer to the characteristic ideas and idiom of the critics of his own time. Like the Neoplatonists, Shelley implies that the Ideas have a double subsistence, both behind the veil of the material world and in the minds of man.....But in Shelley's version of these opinions, the poet sometimes turns out to express not only Platonic Ideas, but also human passions, and other mental materials which he describes in the alien psychology of English empiricism."<sup>24</sup> It is needless to say that this is a highly personal interpretation of Neo-Platonism, which is starkly intellectual and strictly monist. The more important thing in Abrams' analysis is his awareness that Shelley's aesthetics is not merely about Platonic Ideas; it is equally about human passions. What is the source of this dichotomy? What can be the logical foundation of this dualism?

#### IV

Without entering into the debatable question of the double subsistence of Ideas, defended by Abrams, it is interesting to note

how a staunch advocate of Shelleyan Platonism, is making concessions to Shelley's empiricism. Abrams is fully aware that Shelley's poetic theory takes note of 'human passions and other mental materials'. It is not necessary to elaborate further the points of agreement and difference in the elucidation of Shelleyan Platonism by A.C. Bradley, Solve, Wasserman, Winstanley, Notopoulos and Abrams. What is even more interesting is that all of them have gone back not to Plato's *Ion* (defending poetic frenzy or manike) but to the chariot image of Plato's *Phaedrus*. Shelley had translated *Ion*, and his interest in this aspect of Platonism, poetic madness or frenzy is well known. But manike forms a very small part of Shelleyan poetic theory, and a reconstruction of Shelleyan aesthetics on the basis of manike is clearly misleading. "Although care should be exercised not to overemphasise the influence of Dante's poetry exerted upon the composition of *Epipsychidion*, Shelley's estimate of Dante's worth was very high. He had formed an acquaintance with the poet of the *Divine Comedy* late in 1817 and there was a corner of the Milan Cathedral to which during the following spring, he used to retire with a copy of Dante. For the summer of 1819 he and Mary read a number of Cantos together. In 1820 he translated a canzone from the *Convivio*, and in the early months of 1821, while the *Epipsychidion* was being composed, the Shelleys read the *Vita Nuova*... Shelley's own *Vita Nuova* was probably though not certainly composed during the first six weeks of 1821 and the manuscript was sent off to Charles Olliver on February 16 to be issued without the author's name... Shelley's insistence on the abstruseness of the poem's essential doctrine, its esoteric nature, its purity and sweetness which "the 'vulgar' could easily corrupt through misunderstanding, is especially noteworthy in view of the remarks he was shortly to make about Dante in *A Defence of Poetry*. Shelley wished the poem to be accepted and read as a "mystery". It is as 'an explorer of the mysteries of love' that Dante is praised in the *Defence*, where we are told that he "understood the secret things of love even more than Petrarch", and where the *Vita Nuova* is called "an in-exhaustible fountain of purity and sentiment and language". There also the *Paradiso* is said to be "a perpetual hymn of everlasting love"; Dante's "apotheosis of Beatrice in Paradise, and the gradations of his own love and her loveliness, by which as by steps he feigns himself to have ascended to the throne of the Supreme cause", seem to Shelley "the most glorious imagination of modern poetry".<sup>25</sup>

## V

The anomaly in Shelley's aesthetics has been summed up neatly by Hough. "In Shelley's philosophical system there is always a gap between the wretched actuality and radiant and possible ideal. In some of his expository prose writing, he is prepared to fill it laboriously by the methods of patient reformism. But his imagination was more impatient : the gap must be bridged by a spark, and the spark is to be poetry. Poetry becomes the instrument of redemption ; it invades the territory of faith and sets up a succession of short-lived governments."<sup>26</sup> Hough emphasises the natural corollary of Shelleyan Platonism, defended by the most respectable and traditional exposition by a complete generation of critics of the romantic period (vide sec. iii). The corollary is the discovery of "the gap between the wretched actuality and the radiant and possible ideal" and the gap must be bridged by a spark. But if Shelley's interest in Dante (vide sec. iv) be any clue, there is no gap between the Ideal and the real. Shelleyan vision and attitude to poetry is not Platonic, but distinctly apocalyptic.

This interpretation of Shelleyan aesthetics falls into several natural divisions. First, for all his aestheticism, Shelley was a life-long admirer of the Bible. Secondly, if Shelley had been a Platonist or Neo-Platonist of any denomination, his powerful satirical outlook in *Mask of Anarchy*, *Peter Bell*, and *Triumph of Life* remains completely unexplained. Shelley's interest in Pope<sup>27</sup> is part of this generally sceptical, satirical bent of mind. But this is hardly compatible with the traditional view of Shelleyan Platonic romanticism. If Shelley had been interested in Pope, his interest in Dryden has been more pervasive. C. S. Lewis long ago discovered Shelley's indebtedness to Dante. "If any passage in our poetry has profited by Dante, it is the unforgettable appearance of Rousseau in that poem—though admittedly it is only the Dante of the *Inferno*. But I am not without hope that Mr. Eliot might be induced to include more. In this same essay he speaks of a modern prejudice against beatitude as material for poetry. (Selected Essays 1932, p. 250). Now Dante is eminently the poet of beatitude. He has not only no rival, but none second to him. But if we were asked to name the poet who most nearly deserved this inaccessible proximo accessil, I should name Shelley."<sup>28</sup> If Shelley had been a close student of Dante (vide Sec. IV) his "radiant and possible ideal" is not the Platonic Ideal, but one of Dantesque beatitudes. This explains why Shelley could defend Intellectual Beauty of the Hymn, Liberty of his Ode, the "Great Spirit"

of Love, the "One" in Adonais, the Spirit of Nature in Queen Mab, the Vision of Alastor and Epipsychidion—not because all these are "absolutely the same thing" (vide sec. III) different names of Platonic Idea, but different forms of Christian beatitudes.

The thesis that Shelley is an atheist has been questioned by many, including King-Hale and Carlos Baker. "Judging Christ as a man and as a moralist, not as a divinity, Shelley finds him a shining example of Godwinian virtue, so much so that the New Testament soon became his favourite reading."<sup>29</sup> Again, "Shelley thought Socratic and Christian ethics had much in common, and he approved, in the main, of both, while regretting that Christ's teaching had been perverted by Churchmen and theologians."<sup>30</sup> Carlos Baker comes to a similar conclusion. "It was not so much that he (Shelley) disliked the ethical thought of Jesus Christ, which as a youth he had not understood, though he came later to a profound admiration for it. It was rather that for his opinion the whole teaching of Christianity had been utterly perverted and falsified by successive generations of theologians." Socratic metaphysics and Christian theology are basically different (vide sec. III). The Platonic-Socratic metaphysics turns it back on the perverse world of actuality. Christian theology takes note of both the world of perversions and the beatific vision. The poet of millenary vision first comes out with bitter denunciations against the abuses, perversions practised in the name of Christ. To this phase of thought belongs Shelleyan powerful satire in *Mask of Anarchy*, *Peter Bell* and *Triumph of Life*. If Shelley belongs to the satirical tradition of Dryden and Pope, it is because all three had been inspired by the apocalyptic vision. In the pursuit of this vision, Shelley went beyond the Augustans, and was nearer to Elizabethan romantic comedy, with the fine balance between romantic love and wholesome, sometimes satirical laughter. The beatific vision itself came to Shelley through hundred ways, not the least of which is the Dantesque vision of the Paradise.

'Prometheus Unbound' closes with

to hope till Hope creates  
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates ;  
Neither to change, nor fatter, nor repent ;  
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be  
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free ;  
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire and Victory (IV. 575-78)

How close is Shelley's attitude to Hope to Dante's vision will be clear from the following passage in *Paradiso*.



"Hope", said I  
 "Is of the joy to come a sure expectance,  
 The effect of grace divine and merit preceding,  
 This light from many a star, visits my heart ;  
 But flow'd to me, the first, from him who sang  
 The songs of the Supreme ; himself supreme  
 Among his tuneful brethren, "Let all hope  
 In thee", so spake his anthem, "who have known  
 Thy name", and with my faith, "who know not that ?"<sup>32</sup>

Dante gives the definition (of Hope) of Peter the Lombard : Hope is the certain expectation of future beatitude, coming from the grace of God and from precedent merits ; that is, from the grace of God and man's correspondence with that grace by good works ; "for to hope for anything without merits should not be called hope, but presumption."<sup>33</sup> The object of Hope is eternal beatitude, the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body to share in that immortality, as shown by Isaiah (LXI.7.10) and St. John (Revelations VII.9). The beatific vision itself is referred to throughout the *Paradise*, particularly in Cantos IV, VIII, IX, and XXII. It remains for us only to work out the synthesis arrived at by Shelley between the satirical vision and the millenary outlook, both inspired by his reading of Dante.

## VI

Wasserman in his analysis of Shelley's last poetics concedes that Shelley was not much interested in the Platonic ideal Form, as he had been in the Platonic demiurge. As already noted, the Platonic demiurge is the nearest approximation to the creative God of the Genesis [vide Sec. II]. The importance of this unplatonic background of Shelley's poetics, was hinted at, though not openly advocated by contemporary reviewers of Shelley's poetry. These contemporary reviewers give us a much more accurate idea of the truth about Shelley's poetic imagination. An unknown reviewer writes in *British Review* (XVII June 1821, pp. 380-89) on the *Cenci*, "This passage (IV.1.78-111) exemplifies the furious exaggeration of Mr. Shelley's caricatures, as well as of the strange mode in which throughout the whole play, religious thoughts and atrocious deeds are brought together.....In the intermixture of things, sacred and impure, Mr. Shelley is not inconsistent if he believes that religion is in Protestant countries hypocrisy; and that it is in Roman Catholic countries

"adoration, faith, submission, penitence, blind admiration ; not a rule for moral conduct, and that it has no necessary connexion with any one virtue."<sup>34</sup> Earlier, the same reviewer writes, "Cenci makes an open confession to a cardinal of a supreme love of everything bad merely for its own sake.....In the fourth (act) he again comes before us, expressing no passion, no desire, but pure abstract depravity and impiety."<sup>35</sup> The Quarterly Review is equally critical, but emphasises once again Shelley's love of the unintelligible, disgusting and the impious. "Sometimes Mr. Shelley's love of the unintelligible yields to his preference for the disgusting and impious.....The following comparison of a poet to aameleon has no more meaning than the jingling of the bells of a fool's cap, and far less music..... sometimes to the charms of nonsense those of doggerel are added."<sup>36</sup> Shelley's love of paradox has been noted by most of his reviewers. A contemporary reviewer writes in Monthly Magazine (June 1821) on Queen Mab, "The Author before us does indeed, endeavour to astonish, by the extravagance of his paradoxes and the incongruity of his metaphors ; .....It is a continuous declamation without either rhyme or reason", and the speaker may pause where he will without injury to the sense or interruption to the monotonous flow of harangue.<sup>37</sup> Bradley, Solve, Wasserman among the earlier group of critics, and Abrams, King-Hale and Carlos Baker among the later, have missed the implications of contemporary reviews of Shelley's poetry and aesthetics. Both groups have ignored Shelley's love of paradox and non-sense, his attachment to "pure abstract depravity and impiety." A responsible reconstruction of Shelleyan aesthetic's must take note of this element along with his philosophical attitude to Love, Beauty and the prophetic, the millenary vision.

Shelley's "Sonnet : Political Greatness" contains, perhaps the most complete declaration of his faith :

Man who man would be  
Must rule the empire of himself : in it  
Must be supreme, establishing his throne  
On vanquished will, quelling the anarchy  
Of hopes and fears, being himself alone.<sup>38</sup>

Shelley, as Milton Wilson has shown, attempted throughout his life to get free of the burr of self, to project his values outside himself in benevolent identification with others ; he upheld his ideal in spite of personal defeats and disappointments, and that he, like other mortals, failed to achieve complete selflessness, should not blind one to either the nobility of the attempt or the considerable measure of his success. In

Shelley's writings "Love is celebrated everywhere as the sole law which should govern the moral world."<sup>39</sup> This love, the self-giving agape of the New Testament, must rule in a man's heart if he is to achieve his true humanity :

His will, with all mean passions, bad delights,  
And selfish cares, its trembling satellites  
A spirit ill to guide, but mighty to obey,  
Is as a tempest-winged ship, whose helm  
Love rules, through waves which dare not overwhelm,  
Forcing life's wildest shores to own its sovereign sway.<sup>40</sup>

The New Testament "agape" is an un-Platonic, non-intellectual attitude to love. The Rousseau of *The Triumph of Life* had reached the point in his life story at which he would begin to feel the redeeming force of the love that had merely destroyed him. Shelley recognised the danger of pursuing the Ideal ; as he wrote to John Gisborne : "I think one is always in love with something or other ; the error, and I confess it is not easy for spirits cased in flesh and blood to avoid it, consists in seeking a mortal image the likeness of what is perhaps eternal" (Julian ed. vol. X. 401). The problem for Shelley, as for all idealists, was to maintain his vision of the Ideal while living affectionately within the limitations of the sublunary actual world. This is not Platonic. Abrams interprets this as a form of "literary Manichaenism—secular visions of the radical contemptus mundi et vitae of heretical Christian dualism—whose manifestations in literature extend back through Mallarmé and other French Symbolists to Rimbaud and Baudelaire.....Throughout Shelley's poetry there is a "fundamental contradiction "between" the tone of affirmation" and the underlying truth of his "renunciation of the world and society" ;<sup>41</sup> even the conclusion of *Prometheus Unbound* under its surface assurance, expresses "a morbid antipathy and revulsion against society in any form.....an indifference to, even a dislike of human beings" in the concrete".<sup>42</sup> Abrams and Bostetter chose to represent Shelley as a Neo-Platonic Manichae and completely disregarded the materials noted not merely by Shelley's contemporary reviewers but also his life-long interest in Dante. Abram's analysis of Shelley's vision as hovering between hope and dejection (chapter Eight. Sec. 6) is a distortion of the Dantesque journey from Purgatorio to Paradiso. The three journeys described by Abrams in chapter III (Pilgrims and Prodigals) in chapter IV (Through Alienation to Reintegration) and in chapter V (From Blake to D. H. Laurence) are all "circuitous journey" : all forms of Pagan and Christian Neo-Platonism.<sup>43</sup> The "circuitous journey" is

distinctively pagan with little or no Christian overtone. This explains further why in Abram's analysis of "Forms of Romantic Imagination", Neo-Platonism occupies an important place.<sup>44</sup> Such a state of mind provided, perhaps the motivation for Shelley's final poetic effort. But ideas, according to Shelley's poetic theory do not become poetry until they are clothed in memorable images and harmonious Ideal, but more accurately, the Idea, the word becoming the flesh of memorable images and harmonious sound. Love is not merely "the sole law which should govern the moral law", but agape which holds together sound and meaning, body and soul, the word and the flesh.

## VII

It is conceivable that a re-interpretation of Shelley's aesthetics on the basis of his beliefs, political (vide sec II.), religious (vide sec III.) and social (vide sec IV.) as also of his wide-ranging interest in classical and Christian literature is possible. In other words, an interpretation of the Shelleyan aestheticism on the basis of his translation of Plato's *Ion*, his *Defence of Poetry*, and his major poetry including the *Hellas*, *Promethens Unbound*, the *Daemon of the world*, *Mont Blanc* is possible. Wasserman's reconstruction suffers from its exclusive dependence on the *Ion*.

Mario Praz pointed out many years ago the beauty of the Horrid, the Beauty of Sadness, Beauty and Death as elements of romanticism. He devotes the first chapter of his great book to the analysis of the "Beauty of the Medusa". "No picture made a deeper impression on the mind of Shelley than the Medusa, at one time attributed to Leonardo, and now to an unknown Flemish artist, which he saw in the Uffizi Gallery towards the end of 1819. The poem which he wrote upon it deserves to be quoted in full, since it amounts to a manifesto of the conception of Beauty peculiar to the Romantics.

"...                    ...                    ...                    ...  
...                    ...                    ...                    ...

'Tis the tempestuous loveliness of terror ;

For from the serpents gleams a brazen glare

Kindled by that inextricable error,

Which makes a thrilling vapour of the air

...                    ...                    ...                    ...  
...                    ...                    ...                    ...

A woman's countenance, with serpent-locks,

Gazing in death on Heaven from those wet rocks,

"Tis the tempestuous loveliness of terror...' In these lines pleasure and pain are combined in one single impression."<sup>45</sup> Praz carefully reconstructs the aesthetic theory of the Horrid and the Terrible which had gradually developed during the course of the eighteenth century as the basis of Shelley's poem.

Hairs which are vipers, and thy curl and flow  
And their long tangles in each other lock,  
And with unending involutions show  
Their mailed radiance, as it were to mock  
The torture and the death within, and saw  
The solid air with many a ragged jaw.

Curiously the Oxford edition of Shelley's Complete Poems has a Fragment : "Wake the Serpent Not" soon after the poem on the Medusa.

Is it the Romantic interest in the Horrid and the Terrible, which will explain Shelley's picture of the Medusa? "The Daemon of the World" published in 1816 is an early work.

Majestic spirit, be it thine  
The flame to seize, the veil to rend,  
Where the vast snake Eternity  
In charmed sleep doth even lie (lines 98-101)

Earlier the chariot is described :

Floating on waves of music and of light :  
The chariot of the Daemon of the world  
Descends in silent power (lines 56-8)

What is even more interesting the chariot, unlike the chariot in Plato's *Ion*, does not ascend, but actually descends. The chariot itself is drawn by

Four shapeless shadows bright and beautiful  
Draw that strange car of glory, reins of light  
Check their unearthly speed ; they stop and fold  
Their wings of braided air (lines 64-7)

How superficial and misleading is the Platonic parallel will be made clear when it is remembered that the chariot in *Ion* is drawn by a pair of horses, while the chariot of the Daemon is unmistakably drawn by "four shapeless shadows". "The Daemon of the World" anticipates the twin directions towards which Shelley's aesthetics had already been developing, (a) his interest in the Medusan serpent and (b) his interest in the descending chariot drawn by four horses.

Mont Blanc (July, 1816) has not received its proper place in the interpretation of Shelley's aesthetics, presumably because it has been interpreted as a nature poem. Mont Blanc (See. III) begin,

Some say that gleams of a remoter world  
Visit the soul in sleep,—that death is slumber  
... ..  
Spread far around and inaccessibly  
Its circles ?

Immediately after Shelley comes to the mountain :

... .. how hideously  
Its shapes are heaped around ! rude, bare and high  
Ghastly, and scarred and riven,—Is this the scene  
Where the old Earthquake daemon taught her young  
Ruin ? (lines 69-73)

It is the earthquake daemon now in place of the Daemon of the World. But the snakes are not far away, and not difficult to find

... .. the glaciers creep  
Like snakes that watch their pray, from their far fountains  
Slow rolling on

Floyd Stovall in his analysis of Shelley's Hymn to Intellectual Beauty concedes that Love, Beauty, Spirit of the Universe, all refer to the same being. "Shelley did not accept the Pagan doctrine of multiple Gods, but he might think of this Daemon as the Spirit through whom man may be led to an understanding of the immutable laws of the universe. The Daemon of the World, or the Spirit of Love, becomes in a sense the interpreter of inscrutable Necessity, and stands to Shelley in the same relation that Christ stands to the Christians. Cythna's invocation to Love, pronounced from the Atlas of the Federation that was raised for the celebration of Ottoman's fall, contains further evidence that the various names employed by Shelley—Love, Spirit of Beauty, Spirit of the Universe, and Mother of the World—all refer to the same being.<sup>46</sup> All these definitely refer to the same being ; but what is it ? Not the Platonic Idea, but its very negation. The Mother of the World is the matrix, the primary matter, the Samkhyan Prakriti, the basis of all creation. This is the Medusa, the Mont Blanc, the snake associated with the primary matter both in Greek and Hindu Philosophy. (vide see. v).

The advocates of Shelleyan Platonism are confounded when they come to Shelley's interest in Dryden, and satirical poetry of the

eighteenth century.<sup>47</sup> How can an ardent Platonic idealist be interested in satirical poetry, which is, critically speaking, lowly.<sup>48</sup> It is of interest to note that Shelley's model is not Popean satire, but Dryden's more spacious world. In other words, Dryden combined the ideal as an inseparable element of the lowly which Pope did not. Technically speaking, the heroic satire of Dryden fulfilled Shelley's poetic idea, while Popean satire, at best, gave the vision of a world, fragmented and gone awry. It must be remembered that this vision, which is as much ideal as real, and often the two together, approximates more correctly to Shelley's attitude to poetry. This explains how Shelley could define poetry as "at once the centre and circumference of knowledge ; it is that which comprehends all science, and that to which all science must be referred. It is at the same time, the root and blossom of all other systems of thought ; it is that from which all spring and that which adorns all ; and that which, if blighted, denies the fruit and the seed, and withholds from the barren world, the nourishment and the succession of the scions of the tree of life."<sup>49</sup> "The centre and circumference of knowledge" is how Shelley describes the entire range of knowledge, lowly and high, sacred and profane, emotional as also intellectual.

A recent reconstruction of romantic aesthetics makes extensive use of Shelley. "We have found, then, that the metaphorical structure of Romantic poetry tends to move inside and outward inside of outside and upward ; hence the creative world is deep within, and so is heaven or the place of the presence of God. Blake's Orc and Shelley's Prometheus are Titans imprisoned underneath experience ; the Garden of Adonis are down in Endymion, when as they are up in the Faerie Queene and Comus ; in Prometheus Unbound everything that aids mankind comes from below, associated with volcanoes and fountains. In the Revolt of Islam there is a curious collision with an older habit of metaphor when Shelley speaks of

A power, a thirst, a knowledge ... .. below  
All thoughts, like light beyond the atmosphere

The Kubla Khan geography of caves and underground streams haunts all of Shelley's language about creative processes : in "Speculation on Metaphysics," for instance, he says : "But thought can with difficulty visit the intricate and winding chambers which it inhabits. It is like a river whose rapid and perpetual stream flows outwards. The caverns of the mind are obscure and shadowy, or pervaded with a lustre, beautifully bright indeed, but shining not beyond their portals."<sup>50</sup> The title of Frye's brilliant essay, the *Drunken Boat* refers to "the geography of caves and under-

ground streams." This is a natural outcome, according to Frye, of the change in the Romantic aesthetic perspective, "If a Romantic poet, therefore, wishes to write of God, he has more difficulty in finding a place to put him than Dante or even Milton had, and on the whole he prefers to do without a place, or finds "within" metaphors more re-assuring than "up there" metaphors."<sup>51</sup> But Frye does not explain the romantic choice of either the "light" symbol referred to by Shelley, or the "underground streams" symbol used by Shelley. This second symbol has been used again in Shelley's *Defence of Poetry*. "...Poetry...arrests the vanishing apparitions which haunt the interlunations of life.....because there is no portal of expression from the caverns of the spirit which they inhabit into the universe of things.....is secret alchemy turns to potable gold the poisonous waters which flow from death through life."<sup>52</sup>

"The Drunken Boat," the "Daemon of the World," the Medusan snake, the underground stream are not essentially different. "The poisonous waters which flow from death through life" are as much the waters of forgetfulness, of Lethe, oblivion and death, as also the waters of life, of spiritual enlightenment. Again, "a great poem is a fountain for ever flowing with the waters of wisdom and delight."<sup>53</sup> Great poetry is rooted in and draws its sustenance from this "underground stream," this subconscious. It is for this that "poetry is not like reasoning, a power to be exerted according to the determination of the will,...the conscious portions of our natures are unprophetic either of the approach or its departure."<sup>54</sup> But if poetry be unconscious, uncontrolled by reason or will in its origin, what about its essential characters, its end and purpose? Poetry is essentially rational in its structure and organisation. "Hence the language of poets has ever affected a certain uniform and harmonious recurrence of sound, without which it were not poetry, and which is scarcely less indispensable to the communication of its influence, than the words themselves, without reference to that peculiar order, Hence the vanity of translation; it were as wide to cast a violet into a crucible that you might discover the formal principle of its colour and odour, as seek to translate form one language into another the creations of a poet."<sup>55</sup> In its uniqueness of form poetry in Shelley's analysis, is eminently rational. Rooted in the unconscious, in the instinctive, in the underground stream. poetry yet is "the flower and the fruit of latest time."<sup>56</sup> Poetry combines reason and instinct, the conscious and the unconscious; "it is at once the centre and circumference of knowledge; it is that which comprehends all science."<sup>57</sup>

Shelley's attitude to beauty is not Platonic, but Medusan; his attitude to love is once again, not Neo-Platonic, but as noted by Reiman<sup>58</sup>



inspired by the Christian doctrine of "agape." The chariot in *Prometheus Unbound*<sup>59</sup> and *Hellas*<sup>60</sup> is identical with "the drunken boat," the first drawn by the apocalyptic horses (not the Platonic horses in the *Phaedrus*), the second driven on the dark subterranean stream of the Unconscious. This brings us to the images of light<sup>61</sup> and the prophetic character of much of Shelley's later poetry. It would be wrong to associate this prophetic character of *Hellas*.<sup>62</sup> *The West Wind*<sup>63</sup> and *Prometheus Unbound*<sup>64</sup> with Shelley's interest in the French Revolution as the first decisive step towards the millennium. Both Abrams and Frye believe in the political and social bases of Shelley's poetic theory. These bases are not denied: but these are "the circumference" and not "the centre" of knowledge in Shelley's analysis. In combining the spontaneous origin of poetry with the most developed form of intellectualism, in attributing to the poet the gift of prophecy, Shelley was moving towards a deeply cherished belief of the primitive church: this is the gift of tongues, one of the charismatic gift of the primitive church. St. Luke relates that on the feast of Pentecost following the Ascension of Christ into heaven one hundred and twenty disciples of Galilean origin were heard speaking "with divers tongues, according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak."<sup>65</sup> The distinction of 'tongues' was largely one of dialects and the cause of astonishment was that so many of them should be heard simultaneously and from Galileans, whose linguistic capacities were presumably underrated. It was the Holy Ghost who impelled the disciples "to speak," without perhaps being obliged to infuse a knowledge of tongues unknown. The physical and psychic condition of the audition was one of ecstasy and rapture in which "the wonderful things of God" would naturally find utterance in acclamations, prayers or hymns.<sup>66</sup> This gift of tongues has been traced to even secular prophets, who are not necessarily Catholics.<sup>67</sup> Poetry is rooted in the subconscious; it is the fine flowering of rational faculty; it is prophetic, ecstatic or enthusiastic. This should be a fair analysis of Shelleyan aesthetics.

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## ERRATA

<i>For</i>	<i>Read</i>
P. 1, line 16 : <i>Selected Poem</i>	<i>Selected Poems</i>
P. 3, line 23 : a makes	makes
P. 6, line 15 (from bottom) : sricltly	strictly
P. 6, line 5 (from bottom) : passage	passages
P. 8, line 22 : <i>Georgica</i>	<i>Georgics</i>
P. 10, line 12 : that is	that it is
P. 13, line 15 (from bottom) : verabally	verbally
P. 14, line 11 : "imagiste"	"imagist"
P. 48, line 12 (from bottom) : absorved	absorbed
P. 52, line 8 (from bottom) : function	functions
P. 55, last line : ust	not just
P. 56, line 5 : Can	can
P. 59, last line : speakes	speaks
P. 60, line 10 : speakes	speaks
P. 60, line 6 (from bottom) : feeling	feelings
P. 63, line 3 : discussion on	discussion of 'katharsis'
P. 64, line 5 : obeisance	obaisance
P. 64, line 9 : satisfied	satisfied
P. 66, line 8 : Dickens	Dickens,
P. 72, line 14 (from bottom) : descring	describing
P. 72, line 2 (from bottom) : froward	forward
P. 73, line 4 : Individual	Individuals
P. 77, line 10 (from bottom) : dark narraw	dark, narrow
P. 77, line 5 (from bottom) : clustrophobic	claustrophobic
P. 80, line 13 (from bottom) : Diekens	Dickens
P. 81, line 10 : Dosttoevsky's	Dostoevsky's

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DILIP KUMAR MUKHERJEE

This collection of essays is our humble tribute to Prof. Krishna Chandra Lahiri, formerly Reader and Head of the Department of English, University of Calcutta, whose retirement in 1976 has left a void which can hardly be filled up. 'A *whole* man in a procession of broken human figures'—this is how students described him when they bid farewell to him, and his pupils and colleagues know how apposite the image is. A colleague appropriately described him on the same occasion as 'a Bengalee to the tips of his fingers'. Yet he is never provincial; he has a breadth of vision that can accommodate and appreciate contrary attitudes and values. As a teacher he never felt the 'generation gap' that distorts relationships on the human plane. And at the heart of the man there is a love and understanding of poetry that we meet but seldom.

It is a particularly fitting occasion to recall Prof. Lahiri's long and valued association with this literary journal on which he bestowed much loving care, and it is of the grace of things that this volume should be presented to a teacher and colleague who represents, in this 'dismal and illiberal age', the values that we associate with humanistic culture.

Dipendu Chakrabarti

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## MYSTERY, ROMANCE AND REALISM IN SIR GAWAIN AND THE GREEN KNIGHT

---

JHARNA SANYAL

The sound of the battle gear of the war-fields and the cry of the curlew over the clashing waves, are faithful reproductions of the Anglo-Saxon poet's keen awareness of the pressing realities of life. These things were so much a part of his existence that the poet's eye saw the immediate surroundings as threatening his survival, and the pervading atmosphere, being so hostile, was more or less inimical to the spirit of romance for so many reasons.

The attitudes changed in the Middle ages, which discarded the Epic for the Romance: an omnibus terminology in medieval English to include anything which might appear to be a "good story." It has to be admitted that the exclusive court-culture which is so essential a part of the Romance literature is more or less a French import and England perhaps never possessed a confined court society whose activities might have spurred the Romance literature of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The knights with whom the English audience were acquainted were the more mundane administrators of society—even with the possibility of condescending to join a Canterbury pilgrimage with a miller or a reeve. Thus the world of the court and chivalry, of adventures and perils, presented by the romance-writers, was but one remove from the contemporary reality. It is a world that possibly once were but no longer is. It is the world where dreams come true, insuperable difficulties are surmounted by the one man who stands victorious after a succession of some series of adventures. So the world is to that degree removed from the everyday actuality, to that extent different from the recognizable present that they develop a 'fairy-tale' like 'if-it-were' realism.

The old English poems—heroic or elegiac, *Beowulf* or *Deor's Lament*, are the impressions, the lexical reproductions, of a poet's reaction towards a life, of which he himself and his audience were a part. The bleak atmosphere, the fear of invasions, and the threat of annihilation—all these pressed reality so close that it could not be glossed over. So

most of the old English poems cannot but reproduce an image of the actual life seen and felt by both the poet and his audience. In the Middle ages, this pressure dissolves due to so many factors and the poets can now afford to lean back comfortably on contemporary reality and indulge in the romantic world "of eldids that before us were", or in those legends, "As scribes have set it duly

In the lore of the land so long,  
With letters linking truly  
In story bold and strong."

But this remoteness from reality does not necessarily ensure the "romantic" nature of these romances, which portray the characters in supernatural dimensions ; the situations are improbably difficult, yet won over, and the scenes dazzlingly brilliant and perfect. Imagination lends little charm to these pre-conceived, accepted figures and scenes which are made credible by virtue of their supposed antiquity. There is open and emphatic declaration that the poem will be of a land

Where war and feud and wonder  
Have ruled the realm a Space  
.....  
Here many a marvel, more than in other lands  
Has befallen by fortune since that far time.

This introduction diminishes the task of the poet, who no longer needs to build the atmosphere of mystery and marvel since its credibility has been taken as axiomatic. This suspension of disbelief is not the resultant of any imaginative verisimilitude. The traditional romance subject matter deceptively lacks that property of imagination which makes a poet see—

Charmed magic casements, opening on the foam  
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

This imaginative credibility which is independent of any land and time is absent in the medieval romances. Even the Gawain-poet, in pursuance of the generic canon, establishes his poem against the background of history, with reference to Troy, Aeneas, Romulus, Sicius, Brutus, and others. It gradually narrows down to Britain and finally to King Arthur's court.

In a mystery poem like *The Listeners*—there is a plasticity of time and place. The night, the forest, the lonely traveller, all these have no discriminating credentials by virtue of which they can be located in a particular period of history. The message that reverberates through



that dark forest—"Tell them that I kept my word" might have been uttered anywhere and at any time. The essential vagueness or suggestiveness which lends so much to the myterious effect of such poems is absent in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, where at the very outset the audience are prepared for a wonder, in a manner quite reminiscent of the drumbeater in a fair, gathering a crowd for a magic show.

So I intend to tell you of a true *wonder*  
Which many folk mention as a manifest *marvel*,  
A happening eminent among Arthur's *adventures*.

The gorgeous setting is laid out minutely so that it reflects the myriad effects of colour and sound.

Then lords and ladies leaped forth, largesse distributing  
... ..  
Ladies laughed full loudly.....  
With glorious Guinever . . .  
On the princely platform with its precious hangings  
Of rich tapestry of Toulouse and Turkestan  
Brilliantly embroidered with the best gems.

This setting, as the rendezvous of the marvellous appearance, is to be set against the few introductory lines of *Christabel*.

'Tis the middie of night by the castle clock,  
And the owls have awakened the crowing cock ;  
Tu—whit !—Tu—whoo !  
And hark, again ! the crowing cock,  
How drowsily it crew.

The Gawain-poet rejects all such common clap-trap creating a mysterious back-cloth at the background of which a deer appears a dragon. The poet's preference for such little mundane details of real life is once more present in his description of the interior decoration of Bertilak's castle :

The bed-curtains of brilliant silk with bright gold hems,  
Had skilfully-sewn coverlets with comely facings,  
And the fairest fur on the fringes was worked,  
With ruddy gold rings on the cords ran the curtains ;  
Toulouse and Turkestan tapestries on the wall  
And fine carpets under foot, on the floor,

were fittingly matched.

The description of the hunting scenes, the architectonics of Bertilak's castle and similar others go to attest the fact that the Gawain-poet would

not opt for any vague, half-way suggestion though they might have helped in fading out the known bounds of reality and thus transform the known world into a world of shadows. In the midst of such luxurious grandeur, such sumptuous feast, where

Twelve plates were for every pair,  
Good beer and bright wine both

—a green knight on a green horse gallops to the vision of the court multitude,—expectation is fulfilled. This immediate satisfaction of expectancy robs the happening of the sudden shock of surprise which this onslaught on the known world should have caused. He has been deemed “a phantom from the faery land” and the very identification suggests its unfamiliarity, not its improbability. He is strange yet recognizable :

When there heaved in at the hall door an awesome fellow  
Who in height outstripped all earthly men.  
From throat to thigh he was so thickset and square,  
His loins and limbs were so long and so great,  
Yet mainly and most of all a man he seemed,

.....      .....      ... ..      .....      .....  
And the handsomest of horsemen, though huge at that.  
For though at back and at breast his body was broad,  
His hips and haunches were elegant and small.  
And perfectly proportioned were all parts of the man,

...      ...      ...      ...      ...      ...      ...

Another recognizable figure has also been described by Coleridge—

There she sees a damsel bright,  
Drest in a silken robe of white,  
That shadowy in the moonlight shone :  
The neck that made the white robe wan,  
Her stately neck, and arms were bare ;  
Her blue-veined feet unsandal'd were,  
And wildly glittered here and there  
The gems entangled in her hair.

But the shadowy moonlight, the white robe, the glittering gems against the darkness, the lone figure of Christabel at such a place and time spread over the recognizable world a thin veil of mystery that makes the reader wary. The strangeness and unfamiliarity of the vision is obvious in Christabel's utterance :

‘Mary Mother save me now !’  
(Said Christabel,) ‘And who art thou ?’

Gawain too invokes Mary, much later,

And he that eventide  
To Mary made his moan,  
And begged her be his guide  
Till some shelter should be shown.

But at the court, Arthur's first address to the appearance—"Sir Knight..." immediately familiarises him as a part of the courtly reality. So what had been the appearance of a phantom from faeryland is localised as a super-size green-hued knight, and the poet employs detailed description to lend credibility to his human credentials. What is achieved by these processes is not the negative suspension of disbelief but a positive recognition of wonder, on the part of the poet's audience. Keeping up with the spirit of the festive occasion he too has come, not as a menace, but to add another item to the 'Christman gomen,' to extend the invitation for a "blow for a blow." The marvellous reaches its climax when the green knight picks up his severed head :

Holding his head in his hand by the hair  
And surprisingly still, it lifted its eyelids and looked glaringly,  
And menacingly said with its mouth as you may now hear ;  
Be prepared to perform what you promised, Gawain ;...

The facade of reality or credibility which the Gawain-poet had built up so deliberately and so carefully that the green appearance might have a name in terms of real life, collapses and thus enhances the inherent element of the mystery, the imposing uncertainty and the initial human fear of the unknown.

The nature of the testing element being established, the poet, with his superb skill of structural architectonics proceeds to introduce the factor to be tested. Sir Gawain, who is the nephew of King Arthur, as he is introduced by the poet, introduces himself characteristically by volunteering to accept the challenge of the green knight. The poet furnishes a complete assessment of the man who is both physically and morally armed with his battle gear—his shield and its pentangle, his five wits, so that the audience are assured that it is one of the most perfect of knights who is proceeding towards the decapitating operation.

The dazzle and brilliance of the court and its multitude, of which Gawain is a constituent part, is now replaced by bleak nature, dull and colourless and Gawain is in isolation till he reaches a castle. Once

more the characteristic details furnished by the Gawain poet leave no room for uncanny apprehensions. It is a recognisable situation again—

“So many painted pinnacles sprinkled everywhere,

That it appeared like a prospect of paper patterning”—and if ‘paper-patterning’ here refers to the table-decoration so common in the middle-ages, then no description can be more cognizable to the audience. The rustle of hooves and horses, the swirl of men and manners reappear and Gawain finds himself in the known comforts of beautiful “room where the bedding was noble” and where

Several fine soups, seasoned lavishly  
Twice-fold, as is fitting, and fish of all kinds—  
Some baked in bread, some browned on coals,  
Some seethed, some stewed and savoured with spice.

The fear and haunting uncertainty of the previous scene dissolves “at the chimney hearth where charcoal burned.” It is quite a domestic castle interior etched out in the minutest details of cushions, chairs, fur, ermine and such other contemporary luxuries quite familiar to the audience though the knight and his peers belong to a remoter world. Gawain extends something more than court-chivalry to the “Most beautiful of body and bright of complexion”—and

Gawain advances gaily and goes there quickly,  
But the lord gripped his gown and guided him to his seat.

The threat of the green knight seems to be an illusion of the past. In such an atmosphere of relaxation another tryst is made very casually, it will be an exchange of gifts. No doubt, in pursuance of the first tryst Gawain reaches for the second, which apparently does not involve any danger. There is nothing uncanny or eerie about the treaty of the genial host. The hunting scenes are drawn with characteristic details.

Then they beat upon the bushes and bade him come out,  
And he swung out savagely aslant the line of men,  
A baneful boar of unbelievable size,  
A solitary long since sundered from the herd,  
Being old and brawny, the biggest of them all.

Such pictures from the contemporary scene were quite familiar to the fourteenth-century audience who might have also been able to associate them with the parallel bed-chamber scenes which once more testify to the poet's ease with narration and with real-life description—

The lovely lady advanced, laughing adorably,  
Swooped over his splendid face and sweetly kissed him  
He welcomed her worthily with noble cheer  
And, gazing on her gay and glorious attire,  
Her features so faultless and fine of complexion,  
He felt a flush of rapture suffuse his heart.

Such scenes of temptations were a legacy from the age-old times which Gawain, by virtue of his position in the poem, and in keeping with the romance tradition, was expected to recognize and overcome. The Gawain poet introduces a scheme of double obligation in the age-worn problem—

He was concerned for his courtesy, lest he be called caitiff.  
But more especially for his evil plight into sin,  
And dishonour the owner of the house treacherously—

and possibly chivalry is offended as the lady says—

Blame will be yours  
If you love not the living body lying close to you.

Gawain, balancing carefully on the razor's edge of courtly courtesy and Christian chastity, withstands the provocations of the lady, who finally withdraws with a humble extension of appreciation, "a girdle of green silk with golden hem," endowed with the special life-saving capacity. The knight, the pride of King Arthur's court, fortified with his five wits, who dared a blow to the green Knight and resisted the temptation of alluring flesh at nocturnal secrecy, at last succumbs to the basic and animal instinct of self-preservation,—an attribute where he is equal to everyman. The knightly garb is peeled off to reveal the common man born with the fear of self-annihilation. So much had been anticipated and so little is achieved. The poem begins with a severed head and the finale is with Gawain the man, not the insuperable hero of the traditional Romances but the fallible man who proves his universal and primitive human instinct by erring. It is a tremendous achievement for a Romance-writer to construct an iron-fortification with an unusual subterfuge through which the eternal recognizable truth is admitted. No human situation can be more realistic. This was unforeseen, and no mystery poem could have achieved such an effect, exchanging shadows for substance. Yet the commonest truth is wrung out of the recognisable reality through a unique process. The superb sense of realism, the comparative abstinence from supernatural occurrences and adventures,

the familiarization of the unfamiliar—all these are employed in a way unforeseen by his predecessors and contemporaries. The common mystery of phantoms and the romance of fairies transcend their generic limitations as the poem becomes a revelation of human nature, which man preposterously presumes to know so well only to realise what a stranger he is to himself. The Gawain poet delves into this eternal mystery that lurks in the hidden crevices of human nature, through the known alleys of one of the commonest literary forms of the middle ages.

## ORDER AND ANARCHY : THE PROBLEMS OF SATIRE IN BEN JONSON'S COMEDIES

---

SUDESHNA CHAKRAVARTY

Why ? though I seems of a prodigious wast,  
I am not so voluminous, and vast  
But there are lines, whereth I might be embrac'd  
'Tis true, as my wombe swells, so my backe stoupes,  
And the whole lump growes round, deform'd and droupes.  
But yet the tun at Heidelberg had houpes.<sup>1</sup>

Jonson's mountain belly and great thirst were famous, but his image of himself as a gargantuan bottle of wine is more than witty ; it is suggestive. It becomes an apt symbol for the basic tension that we feel in his comedies. His strong appetites, his creative and yet potentially anarchic comic imagination are throughout his work in conflict with his classicist's discipline and shaping intelligence. Alvin Kernan has pointed to the amazing density of *things*<sup>2</sup> that we find in Jonson's plays—the "mercury" and "hog's bones" of Mrs. Otter's face, or the hair, resin and guts that form the basis of Clerimont's music. And not only are there inanimate objects—he also rams in countless animal images—the vulture, the raven, the "well-educated ape"<sup>3</sup>. Side by side we have the noisy busy human world—the sprawling metropolis of London, bustling with men of all classes and occupations. This hectic teeming life—the life of an entire city—constitutes the basic material of Jonson's plays. But side by side with the vivid portrayal of this dense mass of life, one is also aware of his unrelenting moral grasp of his material, constantly judging and scrutinising, subjecting it to the play of his ironic wit. His avowed aim is to show the—

times deformitie

Anatomis'd in every nerve and sinnew.<sup>4</sup>

He is witnessing an age of transition—older sanctions and ethical standards are giving way before new cultural forces which seem self-sufficiently exclusive of any influence from traditional morality. He is excited by these new energies, but he is also the greatest classicist of his day,

deeply committed to values of tradition in religion, politics and art—the satirist who constantly measures the world around him against a supra-real world of harmony and perfection, and castigates it for not measuring up to his ideals. We will find that his moralising zeal gradually becomes mellowed into an acceptance of life as it is, with all its imperfections, as he gradually becomes aware of the unbridgeable gap between his ideals and reality. But the tension between ideal and intractable actuality remains central in his comedies. At their best his comedies are neither pure satire nor pure saturnalia. If they do not entirely fit the satiric formula of judgement and correction, nor do they follow the festive pattern of a joyous triumph of vitality and reality in which the perverted elements are salvaged and included in a brave new world. •

The tensions which come to the fore in the major comedies are only latent in the early plays, but they are unmistakably present. In these plays the pattern is still that of conventional satiric comedy. The follies of the characters are judged as aberrations from the accepted norms of good behaviour and sound sense—absolute values which are unquestioningly accepted as the bed-rock of an ordered and harmonious society. The fools are finally purged of their delusions and brought safely back into society. The exposure of the “humours” requires the presence of a comic expositor who stands apart, holding the fools up to ridicule and channelling the audience’s response to them. In *Every Man In His Humour* this role is performed by the two gallants Wellbred and Young Knowell, and also by Brainworm, the wily trickster who controls much of the action.

Yet already one finds conflicting energies in the play, threatening to disturb the stability of the satirical structure. Social satire has to evoke the norm whose violation it portrays—but it is difficult to accept Justice Clement who embodies that norm—and reject Bobadil as an outcast. The anti-norm threatens to usurp most of our interest. Jonson attempts to embody his normative vision in Clement—an older man successful in the world of affairs, and admitting the desirability of becoming a “staid man”, but one who is also indulgent to youthful energy and excess and values mirth and wit. He stands as the ethical centre of the play. But although Clement is brought in at the end to act as arbiter and dispense judgement, he remains extraneous to the main action of the play. The integrated normative character remains less interesting than the eccentrics and fools—though Jonson’s strong ethical and moral bias compels him to punish his imaginative characters for



deviating from social conformity. Already we notice the pull between his devotion to the ideals of correction and his bent for pure comedy.

The play ends with the restoration of an ordered society as Clement sorts out the misunderstandings, punishes the malefactors and brings people together. Note the presence of traditional comic motifs—judgement, marriage and feasting. The marriage of Edward Knowell and Mistress Bridget unites the characters in ties of kinship, and Clement himself provides the wedding feast, dedicating the night to “friendship, love and laughter.” Yet this order seems imposed from outside—after all, the laughter in the play comes from Brainworm’s adroit manipulations which create divisions, separating son from father, husband from wife, (in the false messages to Kately and his wife) master from servant. Brainworm is an incipient Mosca, for he admits that all his talents are devoted to self-aggrandisement. The application of conventional comic motifs at the end seems mechanical—the marriage of Edward and Bridget is too hastily patched up. Jonson’s vision of an ordered society is incompatible with the wayward energies of his comic world. Later his endings will become parodies of conventional comic endings—the traditional festive comic symbols of harmony will be inverted. Thus, banqueting and marriage recur at the end of *The Alchemist*, judgement at the end of *Volpone* and a combination of both in *Bartholomew Fair*. But most of the marriages are frankly utilitarian; the judgement of *Volpone* is dispensed by agents who are themselves corrupt, while in *The Alchemist* the judgement we would expect at the end never comes. The feasting at the end of *The Alchemist* celebrates the success of manipulation, while in *Bartholomew Fair* it marks the recognition of the futility of all judgement, and the inability to amend. In *The Silent Woman* the wedding feast celebrates a non-marriage. The traditional norms break down.

The pull between warring tendencies—at once a passionate commitment to a vision of ideal perfection and a growing recognition of various anarchic energies which resist any moral censure—becomes more evident in the Comical Satyres. In their prologues and inductions we find Jonson preoccupied with the problems of satire. He would clearly like to cast himself in the role of the ideal satirist—the sane detached observer of the manners of the age, untouched by any personal rancour, who “pursues” with a “constant firmnesse” a “meane” according to which he judges the follies of society.<sup>5</sup> And yet the detached, balanced moralist, when dramatised, tends to become the intemperate railer whose anger against the world that has disappointed him is so intense that he would like to destroy it altogether. In *Every Man Out of his Humour* Macilente stands at the

critical centre of the play and it is around him that the principal contradictions of Jonson's social consciousness at this stage centre. It is doubtful whether Macilente's vituperative criticism is "much too extravagant to be accepted as the expression of Jonson's moral intelligence."<sup>6</sup> Macilente appears to be less a self-complete dramatic character than a spokesman for Jonson's own views. His presence in the play disrupts the creative expression which had gone into the creation of Carlo Buffone. Without Macilente the play would have divided between a lively comic response to urban wit (in Carlo) and an amusing comedy at the expense of foppery. But we are asked to react to such follies with moral outrage. Macilente sees these characters as "monstrous prodigies"<sup>7</sup> and his function is to prevent any comic sympathy with them. He paints their follies as crimes, their antics as vices. His joyless cruelty distorts the play's life that Jonson's imagination evokes. He prevents Carlo, undoubtedly the play's finest achievement, from being fully activated, warding off the energies that without his presence would be more a subject for celebration than stricture.

In *The Poetaster* we find that violently warring opposing energies pull the work askew, so that it loses dramatic coherence. The court of Augustus embodies a vision of ideal order against which all aberrations must be judged. Augustus is the ideal ruler, who with the help of the true poets works to preserve the harmony of the commonwealth :

Happy is Rome of all earths other states  
To have so true, and great a president,  
For here inferiour spirits to imitate,  
As Caesar is...<sup>8</sup>

Poets contribute to this image of order, for poets are the "learned heads" which the enlightened emperor had decided to "advance."<sup>9</sup> From this region of pure poetry and pure order Horace, backed by the authority of Augustus, descends to pronounce judgement on the false poets Demetrius and Crispinus. The *Poetaster* offers the most elaborate exposition of Jonson's vision of the ideal society—and yet, dramatically this vision is a failure. At the climax the adulation freezes the dramatic action.

What is interesting is the contrast to these stately order figures in the rebelliously individual urban wit Captain Tucca. Like Carlo Buffone he embodies an explosive anarchic energy that resists all impositions of morality and order—a wayward vitality that is typical of the city, and that we will later find in the sharpsters of *The Alchemist* and *Bartholomew Fair*. Tucca arouses as much sympathy as distaste, but we are finally asked to reject him as a disruptive element in society. From the excessive critical

heaviness with which Jonson tries to stun his life, it seems he is almost *afraid* of him for he fits into none of the ideas of order and excellence that he is developing here. The relation between Tucca and the order figures is deeply uneasy. The sharp contradiction between urban resilience and the forces of order gives the play its uneasiness of tone.

In this play we find Jonson desperately clinging to his vision of an ideal society which he is aware is threatened by new energies. It makes him regard the real world with an intense loathing for its failure to conform to his ethical standards. The ferocity of the imagery—of animals, of disease—betrays an animus that is not warranted by the events themselves. The figurative language threatens to burst apart, beyond dramatic control. Jonson is too insistent in stressing how distasteful his subject is. The climax of the play comes with emetic being poured down Crispinus' throat, so that he figuratively spits out his inkhorn terms. Afterwards he is recommended a diet of standard authors for his recuperation. This scene has been described as "Rabelaisian" but it is a far cry from the joyous carnality of *Bartholomew Fair*. The pseudodelicacy of the scene offends—with Horace virtuously justifying his conduct as the emissary of Augustus. And the assurance of the author's withdrawn attitude at the end does not win our sympathy. He will retire and watch the others

Like the barking students of Beares-Colledge,  
—Swallow up the garbidge of the time  
With greedy gullets, while my selfe sit by  
Pleas'd, and yet tortur'd with their beastly feeding.<sup>10</sup>

Yet, though artistically a failure, *The Poetaster* is a more interesting play than *Every Man In His Humour*. For though we noted the latent tensions in *Every Man* the basic frame of values was not seriously threatened. The misunderstandings were satisfactorily resolved in terms of approved social standards. The ethical norm was stable enough to make the aberrations of the wayward appear as irrational behaviour, ultimately capable of being recitified. But the equipoise is now breaking down. Jonson is losing his faith in the efficacy of the old positive standards and yet he is still unable to accept the new anarchic energies that are becoming prominent. The fears and falterings of his work must be seen in this context. It is the crisis of a whole culture—a transition from older patterns to a new concept of civilization. In his later comedies we will see him gradually finding a new orientation, coming to terms with the new age. Nevertheless, he never discards his faith in an ideal society. The conflict between order and authority on the one hand and an intelli-

gently aggressive insubordination on the other constitutes the basic dynamics of his comedies.

The immediate result of his loss of faith is a profound emotional disillusionment, which results in a jaundiced view of the world. The plays that follow—*Sejanus* and *Volpone*—seethe with a nervous energy—an indication of a profound anxiety being held in check. They reveal a passionate commitment to an ideal of perfection which is becoming increasingly incompatible with the mundane actuality, and this leads to a fear of what will happen when all its sanctions are removed. *Volpone* and *Sejanus* depict a cosmos where all norms have broken down, where even authority has become vitiated. In *Sejanus* Jonson gives a frightful picture of political power unchecked by any traditional sanctions. He is unable to present any positive forces to balance the total corruption of *Sejanus* and *Tiberius*. At the end there is no comfortable restoration of order—*Sejanus*' death leaves the still more unscrupulous *Tiberius* in complete sway with *Macro* as his new henchman. The senators and satellites are all servile and inconstant—the populace is frenzied, savagely tearing down the body of the fallen favourite. The few good characters are merely denunciatory and represent no positive virtues. Indeed, the action of the play only confirms *Sejanus*' unpleasant principles—"Twas only feare first in the world made gods" and "Ambition makes more trusty slaves, than need".<sup>11</sup>

*Volpone* too presents an unpalliated vision of men as bestially cruel and degraded. C. H. Herford finds it a play in which "the air is heavy and foetid with moral disease".<sup>12</sup> Harry Levin also regards the play as "Jonson's last experiment in poetic justice" belonging to the immature works in tone and ideological standpoint<sup>13</sup>. It is the stern moralist who wishes to hold up a terrible example of a world where conventional morality has become ineffectual. Mosca cynically remarks—

All the world is little else, in nature  
But Parasites, or sub-Parasites<sup>14</sup>.

In this ruthless, self-seeking, materialistic ethos all human relationships have been reduced to the level of those between host and parasite. *Voltore*, *Corbaccio*, *Corvino*, all prey on the (supposedly) dead *Volpone*. *Volpone* himself is a parasite, feeding on others in his turn, for he boasts that he does not work for his wealth. Jonson's moralising fervour has pushed his sympathies back to create a narrow stifling vision of humanity. After all, raven, crow and vulture represent a narrow class even among birds of prey. As C. H. Herford remarks, we cannot but contrast the

unrelieved monotone of their decadent and criminal corruption with the picturesque diversity of the victims of *Face* and *Subtle*.<sup>15</sup>

The play begins brilliantly, with Volpone invoking his gold in hyperbolic terms. The very extravagance of his figures condemns him while keeping us aware of the ethical norms that he is violating. His gold is his "shrine", "far transcending / All stile of joy, in children, parents, friends".<sup>16</sup> His covetousness has perverted his normal values. One finds the same control in the famous wooing scene with Celia. Volpone's values have become so perverted that he can only conceive of emotion in images of cloying sensuousness.

But this control is not sustained throughout the play. There seems to be altogether too much of extreme disgust and loathing. Throughout the play various forms of perversion are dwelt upon. Immediately after the magnificent opening scene, we are introduced to the grotesque creatures of Volpone's household—a dwarf, a eunuch and a hermaphrodite—the ultimate in abnormality. They are Volpone's "bastards"—"that he begot on beggars, Gipsies and black-moores"<sup>17</sup>. Volpone himself, purring on his bed as a lecherous though supposedly dying man, to whom Mosca brings the various clients, is a figure who often resembles a prostitute. One notes the teasing tactile sensations he desires to produce on his clients—

still bearing them in hand  
Letting the cherry knock against their lips  
And, draw it, by their mouths, and back again.<sup>18</sup>

The physically unpleasant details of the characters are emphasised—Volpone's "filthy eyes" and "nose like a common sewre", or Corbaccio's "glazen-eyes".<sup>19</sup> There are also numerous references to violence and cruelty. Corbaccio threatens to cut open Celia's face "like a raw notchet", Volpone calls on Mosca to "play the artificer" and "torture 'em rarely". Later he describes the spectacle as a "feast".<sup>20</sup> We hear of Corvino being thrown into the street to have his "eies beat out with stinking fish".<sup>21</sup> All men seem equally savage and bestial.

Celia and Bonario are too inadequate to stand as the ethical centre of the play. The conventional morality they represent is portrayed as painfully ineffectual in such a vicious milieu. In the trial scene—which proves to be a mockery of a fair trial—they invoke their "conscience/And heaven that never fails the innocent", to which the Avocatori reply—"These are no testimonies".<sup>22</sup> And the representatives of authority, the Avocatori, are far from perfect—we see them anxious to placate Mosca as soon as

they learn of his new wealth. True, at the end justice prevails and all the wrongdoers are punished, but by that time our faith in the sanctity of all human institutions of order and authority has been eroded. We are inclined to echo Volpone's remark—"What face of truth, is here?"<sup>23</sup>

The bitterness of these plays of the middle period stems from the frustrated moralist's despair at the intractability of the physical world, its resistance to all censure and correction. Perhaps the experience of writing these plays forced Jonson to a realisation of

The conscious impotence of rage  
At human folly, and the laceration  
Of laughter, at what ceases to amuse.<sup>24</sup>

From now on we find him gradually overcoming this rancour, recognising the vitality of the physical world of noise, sense and vigour. In the great comedies—*The Alchemist*, *The Silent Woman* and above all *Bartholomew Fair*, we find a buoyant zestful celebration of the disorderly, riotous, variegated, quotidian world. But Jonson never lapses into an easy, uncritical abandon. The early plays had accepted the conventional standards of morality and ended with all aberrants being brought back into social conformity. Jonson never abandons the ethical standards that he had put all his faith in, but he now recognises that there are wayward energies that cannot be forced into conformity. What is admirable is his ability to remain amused despite the lacerations that his ideals receive. The balance and poise of his mature comedies remain precarious, for the tensions are always there beneath the surface.

In the figure of Morose (in *The Silent Woman*), the misanthropist who shuts himself off from the noise of the outside world, we have a descendant of the lofty contemner of the world of the comical satires—Morose is in the line of Macilente and Crites. But the emphasis has now shifted. The satirist no longer has a world of transcendent virtue and timeless truth behind him—instead, his satiric rage is revealed as a form of egotism—

"All discourses but mine affect me".<sup>25</sup>

Significantly, his ideal is "the Turk in his divine discipline"<sup>26</sup>. He is a domestic tyrant. Note, too, Morose's fussy, affected diction, replete with redundancies and periphrases. As Jonson remarked in *The Discoveries*—

"language most shewes a man—it speaks out of the most retired and inmost parts of us"<sup>27</sup>.

In his wooing scene with Epicoene Morose speaks in an archaic language derived from courtly literature, but as soon as he is left alone the mask

slips—the old-fashioned courtliness gives way to a vindictive prophecy of all the misfortunes he will inflict on his nephew through his marriage. His self-absorption results in the sterility of his relationships with other people. His marriage is condemned to failure, for it involves his rejection of his natural ties of kinship with his nephew. By wishing to marry a silent woman—which in itself is an image of unnaturalness—Morose had really wanted “a statue or a motion only”, and he is aptly punished by his discovery that his wife is a “manifest woman” after all<sup>28</sup>. His marriage gives the outside world an excuse to break in upon his seclusion. Finally, he is driven to find a way out by a confession of impotence. His declaration “I am no man, ladies”<sup>29</sup> is an admission of his inadequacy.

At the opposite pole stands Truewit who performs the role of satiric expositor in the play. Instead of the severe moralist who belongs to a higher order of reality than the fools and mixes with them only to expose their folly, we have the gay young gallant who does not stand aloof in lofty disdain but belongs to a group of noisy urbanites representing all the values that Morose rejects. Nevertheless, Jonson still needs a satiric expositor to manipulate the fools into situations that will expose their folly and sentence them to derision. When we come to *Bartholomew Fair* we will find both expositor and justicer ridiculed in their turn and drawn into the circle of fools.

The contrast of the sterile self-absorption of Morose and the noisy gregariousness of the Truewit party becomes reflected in the central symbolic opposition of noise and silence. Note how so much of the noise is associated with the teeming city—in the very first scene we find a catalogue of the various sounds that make London so noisy.<sup>30</sup> The silent Morose mansion becomes opposed to the swirling city surrounding it. The invasion of Truewit and his friends into Morose's silent world signifies the intrusion of a world of noise, vigour and movement. The celebration of this riotous life is brought to a climax at the end of Act III. It begins with the sudden garrulity of Epicoene after the marriage, breaking the “coacted, unnaturall dumbnesse” of Morose's world.<sup>31</sup> Soon after Truewit comes in with the wedding guests, followed by La Foole with the wedding fare. The festivity is completed by Clerimont's music—and note that this music is made with “haire rosin and guts”<sup>32</sup> and belongs to the physical world—by Daw's epithalamion and finally by Otter's bull, dog and bear and promise of a “carouse”. Morose is incited to enjoy “Open pleasure and jollities of feast, of musique, of revells, of discourses”.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, the joyous carnality of “spitting”, “coughing”, “laughter”, “farting”, “dauncing, noise

of the musique"<sup>34</sup> foreshadows the Saturnalian gaiety of *Bartholomew Fair*. Whereas in the two previous plays the imagery of animals suggested cruelty and cunning, here it is their procreative functions that are stressed. Truewit mockingly cautions Morose not to take his wife away and "mount the marriage-bed like a towne-bul, or a mountaine-goate".<sup>35</sup> Surrounded by the assorted noises of the physical world, Morose cries out in anguish—"O the sea breakes in upon me! Another flood! An inundation! I shall be o'erwhelmed with noise—I feele an earthequake in my selfe for't".<sup>36</sup> The imagery allies the energies represented by this group with the forces of nature,

One has to admire the uncompromising honesty which recognises the presence of discordant elements in the midst of this rowdy festivity. After all, the noise also includes the empty word-spinning of the two knights, and the vapid fashionable chatter of the Collegiate Ladies. Their whole way of life perverts all natural laws—with their names like "Centuare", their "masculine, or rather hermaphroditicall authoritie",<sup>37</sup> their reliance on "Art" to disguise nature, their use of contraceptive devices. Paradoxically, they associate birth with barrenness—

Many births of a woman make her old, as many crops make the earth barren.<sup>38</sup>

Admittedly Jonson's acceptance of the quotidian world, with all its life and motion, is ambivalent. Yet, placed beside the sterility of Morose's way of life, even such imperfect representatives of society seem preferable. The physical world is undoubtedly imperfect but one must still, like Truewit, immerse oneself in its realities, instead of cultivating a pose of disdainful aloofness. For, as Truewit realises, sermons "will not take"<sup>39</sup> in this world.

Perhaps Jonson's celebration of the powers of wordly energy is most unequivocal in *The Alchemist*. Throughout the play, our sympathies remain entirely with the trio of tricksters who embody the anarchic vitality of the urban underworld. Incurably materialistic and and down-to-earth, they ridicule and exploit all self-deluding dreams, all attempts to escape from the mundane reality into a realm of absolute perfection. Jonson is not merely ridiculing gullibility or greed. Throughout the play alchemy stands as a symbol for various forms of exaltation. Just as the alchemist attempts to transmute base metal into gold, so also all the characters try to transform their very ordinary lives into something rich and rare. Their vain self-deluding dreams become perversions of



the desire for impossible perfection. From the opening exchange between Face and Subtle, where Subtle claims that he had—

Sublim'd thee, and exalted thee...

Wrought thee to spirit, to quintessence<sup>40</sup>

we find the use of alchemical terms as a metaphor for character transformation. Alchemy also becomes symbolical of the desire to outwit Nature—Mammon claims that Subtle can “firk nature up in her own center,

and teach dull nature

What her own forces are”.<sup>41</sup>

The tendency towards idealisation is further mocked through Kastri's desire to learn the correct terminology of quarrel. It is, Alvin Kernan points out, a reflection of the characteristic Renaissance tendency to transmute the base realities of life into something rare and exotic. Through elaborate codes of conduct fighting is ritualised and made complex and elegant.

The love of idealisation is seen at its extreme in Sir Epicure Mammon, who soared far above the sordid world of actuality to wander among his self-deluding dreams<sup>42</sup>. His extravagant fantasies conjure up a world of softness and luminosity—ethereal and exotic rather than gross and fleshly. In his wooing of Doll he parodies the attitude of courtly love. He is quick to discern in her a “divinitie beyond/An earthly beutie!”<sup>43</sup> One who dreams of the luxuries of ancient Rome can only regard the life around him with disdain. Doll, too, must be elevated above the level of the everyday—this is “no climate

For her to live obscurely in, to learne

Physick and surgery, for the constable's wife

Of some odd hundred in Essen, but come forth

And tast the aire of palaces”.<sup>44</sup>

In these lines Jonson skilfully opposes the reality of life as it is actually lived by ordinary people to the incredible, unrealistic dreams of idealists striving for impossible perfection.

In contrast Face, Subtle and Dol are hard-headed realists, embodying the anarchic energies of the urban underworld. It is a world where older codes of morality and good behaviour are no longer applicable—where each man must fend for himself, relying on his own wits. It is the kind of world that is formulated in Machiavelli's *The Prince* or Hobbes' *Leviathan*. The older stable and morally coherent system is being disrupted by new forces of appetite and aggression. In “this war

of every man against every man—the notions of right and wrong, justice and injustice have there no place—there can be no propriety, no dominion, no *mine* and *thine* distinct, but only that to be every man's, that he can get—"<sup>45</sup>. Like Allwit in Middleton's *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* Face evades punishment because his wit is perfectly adapted to his environment—he wins what he can and keeps it.

These tricksters flourish by exploiting the idealists' capacity for wilful blindness and self-delusion, playing upon their fantasies and inviting them to even more extravagant flourishes. Their wonderful agility and versatility, their delight in role-playing, win our warm sympathy. They "cossen kindly, And heartily, and lovingly" and, in seeing "who shall sharke best"<sup>46</sup> engender a series of spectacular comic coups. One gets a sense of pleasure in the game for its own sake (like the professional pride of the cutpurse in *Bartholomew Fair*).

It is important to note the role of Surly. We might expect him to perform the function of the satiric expositor of the play, for, from the very beginning, he refuses to be duped by the rogues. But Surly's didactic role fails—he too is outwitted in his turn.

"Must I need cheat my selfe,

With that same foolish vice of honestie"<sup>47</sup> he finally exclaims.

Moreover, we remember that Surly is far from perfect—there are indications that he too is a trickster and gambler:

Give me your honest trick yet, at primero,

Or gleek—<sup>48</sup>

He is not above trying to grab the best for himself, attempting to make a profitable marriage with Dame Pliant.

Any expectations that we might have of the restoration of stability and normality at the end are completely foiled. Lovewit does not arrive as the representative of outraged morality coming to pronounce judgment on the wrongdoers. His refusal to join in the general cursing of the house confirms our solidarity with all that the house stands for—a symbol of the gross and mundane in life, resisting all attempts at sublimation or refinement. Far from being an agent of justice, Lovewit embodies the mental agility and histrionic skill that we had seen so far in Face, Subtle and Dol. His marriage to the rich widow and his seizure of the loot confirm the final triumph of the wit and ingenuity without which one cannot survive in this world. In the end wit and mirth become allied

to nourishment. Lovewit is "indulgent to that servant's wit" for "I love a teeming wit as I love my nourishment"<sup>49</sup>. The play ends with festivity—with Face dedicating the play to the audience—

To feast you often, and invite new guests.<sup>50</sup>

The wayward anarchic forces of city life which had been embodied in the alchemists' house are seen at their fullest in the flux and motion of *Bartholomew Fair*. The scene has now widened to include an assortment of human types, cutting across the entire social hierarchy—from the two young gallants, down various strata of the citizenry—a proctor and his wife, a Puritan elder, a justice of the peace, till finally we come to the swarm of tricksters, sharpsters and swindlers who inhabit the Fair and prey on its visitors. The noise and bustle of the Fair provide the heightened conditions in which all pretensions fall off, till we finally come to recognise that men, for all their superficial differences, form part of the same community and are all involved inextricably with one another. Justicer, wit and gallant—all are scrutinised remorselessly and reduced to the basic humanity which they share with the fools and knaves they seek to chastise and reform.

Thus now we have no satiric expositor who can stand aside, controlling and commenting upon the action. At the beginning of *Bartholomew Fair* Winwife and Quarlous retain something of this role. Throughout the first act, they stand aside, keeping up a witty duologue about the various visitors to the Littlewit mansion. They go to the Fair to witness "excellent creeping sport", and think of the misadventures of Cokes as an enjoyable spectacle—

We had wonderful ill lucke, to miss this prologue o'the  
purse, but the best is, we shall have five Acts of him ere  
night : hee'll be spectacle enough :<sup>51</sup>.

Yet, once in the Fair, they find it difficult to preserve their detachment. They would like to remain aloof, yet we realise that they are more familiar with unsavoury characters like Whit and Knockhem than they would like to admit. Finally we see them duelling for the hand of Grace, enlisting the services of the cutpurse to further their projects—their role as detached bystanders completely discarded. The irony is turned against Quarlous himself when we find him still trying to maintain his superiority over Edgeworth's "companions in beastliness", trying to explain away his deal with the cutpurse—"it was for sport"<sup>52</sup>.

In this chaotic riotous world the traditional figures of law and authority can only appear comically incongruous. The three representa-

tives of moral authority—Waspé, Busy and Overdo—are all derided and held up to ridicule. Ironically, all three end up in the stocks, themselves accused of disrupting law and order. In the early plays those with a passion for setting things right had themselves been morally inviolable and had finally made their lofty standards prevail. Now the custodians of virtue are mocked in their turn. Busy who finds “abomination” in the carnal pleasures of the Fair, is a manifest hypocrite. Waspé, another enemy of licence, driven to fury by his pupil’s fondness for “vile tunes”<sup>53</sup> is ultimately chastised into a recognition of his own folly—“He that will correct another, must waunt faulte in himselfe”<sup>54</sup>. Overdo sees himself as the upholder of law and order in a corrupt society, the representative of “Justice” “the King” and “the Commonwealth”,<sup>55</sup>. To him the Fair stands as an “enormity” which it is his divine duty to reclaim. But this upholder of morality is himself vitiated by a love of gain—for he is forcing his ward to marry his brother-in-law for the sake of her fortune. And throughout the play, his missionary zeal is completely misguided. He sees the cutpurse as a poor innocent who must be rescued—ironically, his diatribe against tobacco provides Edgeworth with an ideal opportunity to steal Cokes’ purse. Overdo becomes a mock version of the traditional figure of the divine dispenser of justice who moves in disguise to discover enormities and finally reveals his true identity to restore the balance of law and order. Overdo’s disguise, “A certain middling thing between a fool and madman”<sup>56</sup>, reveals his true nature. He sees his moment of self-revelation as apocalyptic—when “cloud-like”, he would “break out in rain and hail, lightning and thunder, upon the head of enormity”<sup>57</sup>. But the moment of glory becomes a total catastrophe, as he discovers his own wife in the company of the Knaves he seeks to expose. Finally, Quarlous exhorts him to “Remember you are but Adam, flesh and blood”, to think of the Fair people as “good friends”, not “enormities”<sup>58</sup>.

Ironically, the only person in the play who respects Justice Overdo’s warrant is the madman Trouble-all. All through the play licences and warrants, symbols of legal sanction, are proved to be nothing better than dead letters of the law, capable of being perverted or misinterpreted. Trouble-all, who will not perform the slightest tasks without documentary sanction, can easily be deceived by Knockhem who forges a warrant. This madly conscientious law-abider finally becomes a hunted thief who steals Ursula’s pan to cover his nakedness. The play opens with a marriage licence drawn up by a ‘Littlewit’ for an improbable match

between Grace and a 'Cokes.' The emptiness of the licence is emphasised by Waspe refusing even to look at it and haggling instead over the price of the box that contains it. When Cokes wishes to see it, he is rebuffed—"there's nothing in't, but hard words."<sup>60</sup> Quarlous manages the largest theft by forging the licence. Inevitably, Overdo's carte-blanche of absolute authority falls into the wrong hands. For this is a disorderly anarchic world where law and order have become ineffectual. Even Grace, who stands for sobriety and good sense, has to decide her future through a lottery—with the madman Trouble-all becoming the arbiter of her fate. She recognises the absurdity of such a choice, yet this is the only way one can cope with an absurd world.

In this milieu the positive energies are located in the swarm of tricksters, sharpers and knaves who make up the Fair. Their world resists description in any but the grossest physical terms. At its centre looms the enormous figure of Ursula—"Punk, Pinnace and Bawd," presiding over the Fair as a life-force. She is "the fleshly woman," "having the marks upon her of the three enemies of Man"—"the World," "the Flesh," and "the Devill."<sup>61</sup> Hugely fat, and forever sweating, she is described in overwhelmingly physical terms. Her booth, with its perpetual eating, drinking, cheating, pimping and whoring epitomises the world of the Fair. The insistent physicality of this world is repeatedly stressed. There are constant references to the most basic physical urges—Mistress Overdo's need for a basin to spew in precipitates the denouement. It is, however, a world of joyous carnality—with no suggestion of prurience. One finds a similar vigorous obscenity in his poem on *The Famous Voyage*. It is a quality we naturally associate with Rabelais—an enthusiastic vulgarity which bespeaks an ease in the presence of life's grossness. To quote Jonas Barish, "The sense of organic process is everywhere"<sup>62</sup>. Mrs. Littlewit's pregnancy sets the plot in motion—and throughout the play Trouble-all's demented "Quit ye and multiply ye" runs like a refrain. We must also consider the numerous mentions of food and drink—the Puritan family's urge for roast pig, the gluttony of Busy, the gingerbread of Trash the orgy of eating and drinking in Ursula's booth. Drinking and eating together are after all inalienably social acts, and one realises that these fair people, disorderly and quarrelsome though they may seem, all belong to one great community, bound together by ties of fellowship—witness, for example, their concern for Ursula when she is scalded by the pan.

But any discussion of the vigorous earthy physicality of the play tends to make it sound too much like a Saturnalian festive comedy. It

must be stressed that what we have here is no easy celebration of the grossness of life. The stern moralist of the comical satires, who judged actuality by a standard of ideal perfection, has not disappeared entirely. The satirical thrust may be more difficult to perceive, but it is still present. Jonson's attitude to the Fair, if not one of rejection, is certainly neither one of total indulgence. And indeed it is this complexity of tone that makes *Bartholomew Fair* the very great play that it is. Jonson's portrayal of the Fair is completely unsentimental. He evidently enjoys the vitality and daring of the sharpsters, but, with unflinching honesty, he also admits that they are totally unscrupulous and self-seeking. Their chief victim is Cokes, the innocent whose ardent enjoyment of the pleasures of the Fair endears him to us. Even he is dismayed at the "thieving and coz'ning in this whole Fair"—"I would not ha' used a dog o' the name so."<sup>62</sup>

The tension between disapproval and warm enjoyment is sustained till the very end. The shifts in tone keep the reader's attitude open—we are not allowed to settle into any fixed response to the Fair. Till the end, one is never quite sure that Jonson will not lapse into an acrimonious condemnation of the evils of the Fair. The puppet-play at the end offers an example of this ambivalence of attitude. In many ways the puppet-play is an image of the Fair—it mirrors the drinking, eating, whoring, pimping, and bickering that characterise the inhabitants of the Fair. Littlewit has made the classic stories of Hero and Leander and Damon and Pythias "a little easie, and moderne for the times."<sup>63</sup> It seems that the present age can only accommodate the lofty ideals of heroic love and friendship by debasing them to the level of an obscene tavern brawl. Human life has been scaled down to the limits of a trivial puppet play. It is a disturbing image of littleness and vulgarity. We must remember that puppet plays normally aroused Jonson's aversion—"A man cannot imagine that thing so foolish, or rude, but will find, and enjoy an Admirer; at least, a Reader or Spectator. The puppets are seen in despite of the Players."<sup>64</sup> Artistically, the puppet play is a nullity—it is a trenchant comment on popular taste.

This makes the final vindication of the puppet play all the more significant. It shows an admirable generosity that can enjoy with relish without glossing over any of the defects or shortcomings. The play ends in a spirit of festivity—with a feast and a continuation of the entertainment—and the gaiety is all the more moving because of our awareness of the tensions that Jonson masters in order to achieve this tone.

*Bartholomew Fair* represents the peak of Jonson's comic achievement. It shows the perfect balance between the opposing energies that one discerned all through his work—an appreciation of the vitality of an aggressive insubordination co-existing with a deeply felt longing for a society of perfect harmony and stability. But Jonson cannot sustain this balance for long. In the plays of his later period, the tensions that contributed to the complexity and energy of the great comedies have slackened, and the result is a loss of dramatic coherence. The conflicting interests, though still discernible, do not combine in any significant dramatic pattern. The lack of cohesion in *The Divell is An Asse*, for example, is also reflected in the uneasy shift in the structure. Jonson attempts to place his action within the framework of an older morality pattern, the role of satiric presenter being taken over by two devils who belong to an older stage tradition. But this framework remains extraneous to the main realistic action of the play. The major part of the play is taken up with a detailed and analytic observation of the contemporary urban scene. The focus is on topical themes like the working of industry, the Courtiers' monopoly distribution, legal corruption, and property swindles. Many of these themes will later provide the staple of Middletonian comedy—such as the cycle of rich tradesman cozening landed gentry, yet seeing his children grow up as gentry, and the young prodigals coming back to the city to be cozened in their turn by city sharks and coney-catchers. Much of the social criticism is severe, yet the ending is indulgent, with Fitz-dottrel voluntarily confessing his wrongdoings and being brought back into the fold. Yet the ending seems contrived—it seems an attempt to impose an optimism on a world seen sadly through cynical eyes. We detect a note of despair in his reliance on "The few that have the seeds of goodnesse left"<sup>65</sup>. He fails to give dramatic life to his ideal of perfection—Manly, Wittipol and Lady Fitz-dottrel fail to arouse the reader's interest.

To get a picture of the positive ideals that Jonson cherished throughout his career one must turn to his poetry. Both *To Penshurst* and *To Sir Robert Wroth* create an image of a society based on perfect order and harmony, gaining its vitality by the rejection of the pride and ambition that characterise the world outside. But Jonson never manages to incorporate this vision of communal harmony into his comedies. As we saw in *The Poetaster* any attempt to dramatise his positive ideals only freezes the dramatic action. For in the comedies Jonson is directly engaged with the contemporary urban scene, trying to come to terms with

its hectic, vaiegated life. London—the capital city and chief port, centre of expanding manufacturing industries, growing in importance as a centre of commerce—represents a new reality where older rules of morality no longer seem applicable. The essential dynamism of the comedies comes from this conflict of law and licence. We have here a classically educated, critical mind, committed to ideals of order and stability, who also takes a keen interest in the variety of city life—a life fraught with its own anarchic energies, resisting any impositions of law and order. Jonson admires the vitality of this world, and yet behind his celebration of its gaudy raucous energy, we discern the satirist's despair at the failure of real life to conform to his ideals of absolute perfection.

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  2. *The Cankered Muse*—Yale University Press, 1959, pg. 169.
  3. *Bartholomew Fair*—*H/S* Vol VI—Induction—Line 17.
  4. *Every Man Out of his Humour*—*H/S* Vol. III—Induction-1. 120-21.
  5. *Poetaster*—*H/S* Vol. IV—Prologue 1. 22-3.
  6. O.J. Campbell—*Comicall Satyre and Shakespeares Troilus and Cressida*, San Marino. 1938, pg. 61.
  7. *Every Man Out of his Humour*—op. cit.—Act III, Sc. 4.1.28.
  8. *Poetaster*—op. cit.—Act V. 1.38-41.
  9. *ibid.* Act V, Sc. 1. 1.52.53.
  10. *ibid.* Act V, "To the Reader"—1.45-48.
  11. *Sejanus*—*H/S* Vol IV—Act II, 1.162 ; Act I, 1.366.
  12. *H/S* Vol. II, pg. 55.
  13. "Jonson's Metempsychosis" in *Philological Quarterly*. xxii, 1943 pp. 237-8.
  14. *Volpone*—*H/S* Vol. V—Act III, Sc. 1, 1.12-13.
  15. *H/S* Vol. II—pg. 63.
  16. *Volpone*—op. cit.—Act I, Sc. 1, 1.12 ; 1.16-17.
  17. *ibid.* Act I Sc 5 1.43-45.
  18. *ibid.* Act I, Sc. 1, 1.88-90.
  19. *ibid.* Act I, Sc. 5, 1.57.65, Act V, Sc. 3, 1. 25.
  20. *ibid.* Act III, Sc. 7, 99 ; Act V, Sc. 2, 1.111 ; Act V, Sc. 3, 1.108.
  21. *ibid.* Act V, Sc. 12, 1.140.



22. *ibid.* Act IV, Sc. 6, 1.16-18.
23. *ibid.* Act V, Sc. 2, 1.35.
24. T.S. Eliot—*Four Quartets*.
25. *The Silent Woman*—H/S Vol. V—Act II, Sc. 1, 1.4
26. *ibid.* Act II, Sc. 1, 1.29-30
27. Discoveries—H/S Vol. VIII-1.2031-2.
28. *Silent Woman*—op. cit.—Act III, Sc. 4, 1.38,42.
29. *ibid.* Act V, Sc. 4, 1.44
30. *ibid.* Act I, Sc. 1, 150-180.
31. *ibid.* Act III, Sc. 4, 1.54.
32. Act III Sc. 7 L6
33. *ibid.* Act III Sc. 5, 1.50.1.
34. *ibid.* Act IV, Sc. 1, 1.8.9.
35. *ibid.* Act III, Sc. 5, 1.46-7.
36. *ibid.* Act III Sc. 6, 1.2-5.
37. *ibid.* Act I, Sc. 1, 1.80.
38. *ibid.* Act IV, Sc. 3, 1.60-1.
39. *ibid.* Act I, Sc. 1, 1.67.
30. *The Alchemist*—H/S Vol. V—Act, I, Sc. I, 1.68,70,
41. *ibid.* Act II, Sc. 1, 1.28 ; Act IV, Sc. 1, 1.88,89. Note the sexual overtones in terms like "firk". Ironically, many of the alchemical terms also have sexual connotations. As in Act II, Sc. 3, 1.254-55 :

"She'll mount you up like quick-silver  
—and circulate, like oile"—  
or later "I'll have gold before you  
And less danger of the quicksilver  
Of the hot sulphur—" Act II, Sc. 3, 1.286-8)

Alvin Kerman points out in the Yale edition of the play that quicksilver and hot sulphur, basic ingredients of alchemy, were also used to treat venereal disease.

42. One finds a useful gloss on the Mammon world in Bacon's conception of hope. In *De Augmentis* Bacon asserts that "they who are carried away by insane and uncontrollable passion after things which they only fancy they see through the the clouds and vapours of imagination shall in the place of works beget nothing else than empty *hopes* and hideous spectres." (Bacon—Works ed. Spedding, Ellis and Heath—London, 1857-74)—Vol. IV—p. 367.7. Bearing in mind Jonson's admiration for Bacon, we may consider Mammon as a Baconian hopeful.
43. *Alchemist*—op. cit.—Act IV. 1, 1.65-6.
44. *ibid.* Act IV, Sc. 1, 1.132-135.
45. Thomas Hobbes—*Leviathan*—ed. M. Oakeshott (Oxford 1946)—p. 83.
46. *The Alchemist*—Act I, 1.137-8, 1.160.
47. *ibid.* Act V, Sc. 5, 1.83-4.
48. *ibid.* Act II, Sc. 3, 1.284-5.
49. *ibid.* Act V, Sc. 5, 1.150 ; Act V, Sc. 1, 1.16-
50. *ibid.* Act V, Sc. 5, 1.165.
51. *Bartholomew Fair*—op. cit.—Act III, Sc. 2, 1.1-3.

52. *ibid.* Act IV, Sc. 6, 1.21, 1.30.
53. *Ibid.* Act I, Sc. 4, 1.71.
54. *ibid.* Act V, Sc. 4, 1.99-100.
55. *ibid.* Act II, Sc. 1, 1.1-2.
56. *ibid.* Act II, Sc. 2, 1.144-5.
57. *ibid.* Act V, Sc. 2, 1.4-6.
58. *ibid.* Act V, Sc. 6, 1.96-7, 1.108-9.
59. *ibid.* Act I Sc. 5, 1.35-6.
60. *ibid.* Act III, Sc. 6, 1.33-7.
61. J. A. Barish—*Ben Jonson and the Language of Prose Comedy*—Harvard University Press 1960—p. 226.
62. *Bartholomew Fair*—op. cit.—Act IV, Sc. 2, 1.70, 77-8.
63. *ibid.* Act V. Sc. 3, 1.121.
64. *Discoveries*—op. cit.—1.608-611.
65. *The Divell is an Asse—H/S*—Vol. VI—Act V, Sc. 3, 1 172-3.

## ELIZABETHAN ACTORS AND ACTING

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SUSHIL MUKHERJEE

Speaking of Elizabethan actors, Stephen Gosson in *Plays Confuted In Five Actions* (1582) says that players were recruited from three sources. There were men who left their jobs to join a theatrical group. James Burbage, the founder of the first English playhouse, The Theatre, was a carpenter; Richard Tarlton, the famous comedian, swineherd; Robert Wilson a water-bearer; Heminges a grocer; Robert Armin a goldsmith's apprentice and so on. Other members of Shakespeare's company, Augustine Philips, Richard Cowley, William Sly, Henry Condell—all came from trades. The members of Bottom's company in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* also came from various trades. Snug was a joiner, Snout a tinker; Bottom, a weaver; Quince, a carpenter. The second group came from the ranks of "common minstrels," and the third were "boys trained from childhood" who joined, to use Gosson's language, "the abominable company."

### *No Special Training :*

The actors of the early English theatre had to depend upon natural talent rather than any kind of systematic training for which there was no provision, except in the case of the 'boys.' In the Boys' schools acting was a part of education. The boys of St. Paul's School were trained to act in the Miracle plays and they had a tradition of two centuries behind them. The children of Chapel Royal were also similarly instructed. But few joined the professional groups before 1600.

### *Repertory System :*

The prevalence of the Repertory System also did not provide much time for systematic training for the early Elizabethan actors. The stage was supplied with a constant stream of plays, new and old, but all for a few days only. The average life of even a successful play was about 15 or 20 performances, not consecutive, but with other plays thrown in between. *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Dr. Faustus* were two exceptions. They had a continuous long run. The Elizabethan actor had, therefore, to memorise

a lot. Edward Alleyn had to do 71 different plays, 52 new and 19 old, between June 5, 1594 and July 29, 1597.

#### *Commercial Theatre :*

The Elizabethan theatre was a commercial theatre above every thing else. Its main concern was success in terms of receipts at the box-office. Putting up new attractions was one of the means of this success. The writers of plays kept the stage fed with fresh plays. Plays were written in a hurry.

#### *The Rehearsal :*

The Rehearsal too was a hurried affair. Parts were distributed among the actors in separate strips of papers, with stage directions and brief 'cues,' for memorising. The Rehearsal Scene in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* may be referred to in this connection. Each player was concerned with his own part only, with no knowledge of the play as a whole. The complete play script was carefully guarded for fear of its being stolen by a rival company. The Producer, in the modern sense, was unknown. There would be a trainer for individual players. Shakespeare, it is said, was a good trainer, in fact, a better trainer than a player. Group-acting was not known. Individual brilliance rather than collective excellence was the aim. There was no long-range planning for the opening of a new play. There was brisk activity behind the scene and plays were brought on the stage with an astounding rapidity.

#### *The Star and the Comic Actors :*

Each Company had its 'star' actor. Edward Alleyn was the 'star' of Admiral's Men, Richard Burbage of Chamberlaine's Men and so on. But there was no scope for specialisation as the same actor was called upon to do roles of various types, and sometimes more than one role in the same play. This was called 'doubling.' For mob scenes there were 'hired men' and supernumeraries. Fat parts were reserved for the star actor and the writers had to take into account the demand of the star actor or his special capacity or preference. Edward Alleyn was the hero of all Marlowe's plays, while Richard Burbage was Shakespeare's tragic hero, from Richard III to Mark Antony in *Antony and Cleopatra*. Shakespeare kept Richard Burbage in view when writing his plays for the stage. Elizabethan dramatists had to shape, size and conceive characters keeping in view the players who would do them. For Will Kemp Shakespeare

wrote the role of Dogberry with broad humour which was Kemp's *forte*. When Robert Armin came for comic parts, Shakespeare created subtle humour for the artiste who was an expert—and we get Touchstone, Feste, and the Fool.

#### *Actor's Qualifications :*

Memory and versatility were demanded of all Elizabethan actors. Physical fitness and agility was a 'must' for him because, in the early stage acting was linked with dancing, vaulting, tumbling, fencing etc. Character-acting developed later. Until Marlowe characters did not 'develop' on the stage. Most of the characters were types, as in the Morality plays, and so the acting was more or less stereotyped. With more and more subtlety in characterization the art of acting developed.

The adults who joined the Acting companies, had, on the average, a grammar-school background and that was considered enough. Puttenham in his *Apology for Actors* speaks of "a good tongue" and a "good conceit" as necessary qualifications of an actor. "Any of these will do", says Puttenham, "but where both fail there can never be a good actor."

#### *Rhetorical Ability :*

Since Elizabethan drama depended a great deal upon words and verses, it was expected that the actors should have a good, powerful, and flexible voice with volume and intensity, right pronunciation, clear articulation, apt modulation, and also breath. Elizabethan acting was in a way allied to oratory, and teaching of rhetoric was part of grammar-school training. The external action of the orator and the actor had also a great deal of similarity. Granville Barker says : "Elizabethan drama was built upon vigour and beauty of speech and the Elizabethan actor had to make himself the appropriate medium to convey this vigour of action and beauty of speech to the audience."

#### *Boy Actors :*

The Elizabethan stage had no actress. Female roles were done by boys. "Squeaking Cleopatra" is too well-known an expression to be quoted today. No woman appeared on the English public stage till December 1660 when Mrs. Hughes and Mrs. Rutler did the roles of Ophelia and Emilia in *Hamlet* and *Othello* respectively. The Boy Actors of the Elizabethan stage, after they were trained in the Tudor schools,

were recruited for the wandering companies, and later for the public theatre, and placed under some senior actors as apprentices.

It is unfortunate that of the boy actors only a few names are known, such as Solomon Pavy of Queen's Chapel, who died at 13 after only three brief years on the stage, and yet called "stage's jewel" by Ben Jonson; Abel Cooke, John Rich, Samuel Crosse, Robert Wilson, Samuel Gilburne, James Sands and a few others. But nothing is known about the roles they did. One thing however is clear. Shakespeare wrote women's roles keeping in view the artistes available, their talent and ability, their physical features and characteristics. In his essay on *Shakespeare's Actors*, G. B. Harrison has pointed out that when Shakespeare was writing romantic comedies he had in his company two boys with contrasting height and complexion, and so we have Rosalind, Beatrice, Viola who are tall and fair, while Celia, Hero and Maria were just opposite. Ivor Brown in his *Shakespeare* has drawn our attention to a very interesting thing. He says that towards the end of the 16th century, just before he started writing his major tragedies, Shakespeare in his romantic comedies created female characters the rendering of which needed special skill and talent on the part of the artistes concerned—and he had such artistes in his company. Brown, however, mentions no name. In the next phase, in his tragedies the heroines, Ophelia, Desdemona, Cordelia are not difficult roles from the acting point of view. They are sweet things who weep and make the audience weep. This is not so difficult a task as the rendering of the sprightly, lively, vivacious and brilliant roles of the heroines of his sunny comedies. This was because he had probably not the necessary talent in his possession at the time. As regards Lady Macbeth or Cleopatra, Ivor Brown says that it may be assumed that some boy actor had grown up sufficiently by this time to do these exacting roles. It may also be, Ivor Brown supposes, that *Antony and Cleopatra* did not become popular on the stage because of the failure of the boy actor in doing the very difficult role of the heroine with her "infinite variety." After Cleopatra, Shakespeare wrote only sweet roles of country-girls—Imogen, Marina, Perdita, Miranda—roles which could be easily tackled by boys.

#### *The Actors :*

The first to become famous as an actor was Edward Alleyn (1566-1626). Possessing an imposing figure and a powerful voice Alleyn exploited his natural gifts fully in the roles of Hieronymo (*The Spanish Tragedy*),

Barabas (*The Jew of Malta*), Tamburlaine and Dr. Faustus. His style of acting was heavy and robustious. Marlowe wrote his "mighty lines" keeping Edward Alleyn's acting style in view. Alleyn was much admired till Richard Burbage introduced a new style. Alleyn's style was statuesque while Burbage had more movement and action.

Richard Burbage (1567-1619), son of James Burbage, the builder of the first theatre-building, The Theatre, was, by common consent, the greatest actor of the age. He was Shakespeare's 'hero,' as Alleyn was Marlowe's. Shakespeare wrote special parts for Burbage and Burbage too spent his entire acting-life in Shakespeare's company (Chamberlaine's Men and King's Men). Shakespeare was deeply attached to this actor-friend who successfully rendered roles of the heroes of his four great tragedies, as also those of Richard III (Burbage's fame as a tragic actor began here), Richard II, Henry V, Shylock, Brutus, Antony, Coriolanus, Romeo, Prince Hal, Pericles. He also played the roles of Hieronymo in *The Spanish Tragedy*, and Ferdinand in *The Duchess of Malfi*. Shakespeare left him in his will a sum of 26 shillings and 8 pence to buy a memorial ring with.

Will Kemble ( d.1603 ) was the comedian of the company. By 1590 his reputation as a comedian in the style of Richard Tarlton, was established. In 1594 he joined Chamberlaine's Men and acted till 1599. Later he transferred his affection to Worcester's Men where he played in 1602-03, after which his name is not heard. Kemble's comic style included acrobatics and jigs. He could "bounce and jingle" on the stage. He was an expert in "low comedy" and Shakespeare's earlier clowns were made to suit his genius—Peter ( *Romeo & Juliet* ), Dogberry ( *Much Ado About Nothing* ). He had the habit of saying a few extempore lines. When Shakespeare makes disapproving remarks against this common vice of the clown through Hamlet's directions to the Players ( *Hamlet* Act 3 Sc 2 L.42-50 ), he had Will Kemble's habit in view.

Robert Armin ( 1568-1615 ) joined Shakespeare's company in 1600. Originally a goldsmith's apprentice, Armin began his acting career as a member of Lord Chandos' Men. He was a disciple of Richard Tarlton, but evolved his own style of comic acting which was more intelligent and refined. When he joined after Will Kemp, Shakespeare changed the character of the Clown and brought on the stage Feste ( *Twelfth Night* ), Touchstone ( *As You Like it* ), and above all, the Fool in *King Lear*. Armin also played the role of Dogberry done earlier by Kemp, but in a different style. His another important role was Polonius in *Hamlet*.

John Heminges ( d.1630 ), more well-known as co-editor of the First Folio edition of Shakespeare's plays ( 1623 ), was not only an actor, but also business-manager of Shakespeare's company. Originally belonging to Lord Strange's Men, he joined Chamberlaine's Men in 1594. He acted in Ben Jonson's plays also—*Everyman in His Humour*, *Everyman Out of his Humour*, *Sejanus*, *Catiline*, *Volpone*, *The Alchemist*. According to Malone he did the role of Falstaff also. He left acting in 1611 and devoted himself entirely to the business side of the company.

Henry Condell ( d.1627 ) who was the co-editor, with Heminges, of the First Folio edition of Shakespeare's plays, also belonged to Shakspeare's company of players. He acted in Ben Jonson's dramas. He also played the role of Cardinal in *The Duchess of Malfi*. He gave up acting in 1623. He was the second recipient of 26 s. and 8 d. in Shakespeare's will for the purchase of a memorial ring.

Thoms Pope ( d.1604 ) was a member of Chamberlaine's Men since inception i.e.1594, and played high comedy roles, including that of Falstaff. He also played in Shakespeare's earlier comedies. A quick-witted jester and quibbler, he played in Ben Jonson's two Humour Plays. In *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* he did the role of Speed with Will Kemp as Launce. After Pope Falstaff was done by John Lowin.

Richard Cowley ( d.1619 ) was another comedian in Shakespeare's company whose physical frame and pale face suited the roles he played. He did Verges in *Much Ado* with Will Kemp as Dogberry. In *As You Like It* he was William, in *Twelfth Night* Sir Andrew Aguecheek, in *Henry IV Part II* Silence, in *Merry Wives* Slender etc.

William Sly ( d.1608 ) who acted in Strange's and Admiral's Men joined Shakespeare's company in 1594 and acted here till 1605. He was specially chosen for eloquent, romantic or soldierly parts—Lewis ( *King John* ), Dauphin ( *Henry V* ), Hotspur ( *Henry IV* ), Laertes ( *Hamlet* ), Claudio ( *Measure For Measure* ), Tybalt ( *Romeo & Juliet* ), Edmund ( *King Lear* ), Macduff ( *Macbeth* ) etc. He also acted in Jonson's *Everyman*, *Volpone* and *Sejanus*.

Augustine Philip's ( d.1605 ) name appears as "one of the principal actors" in the First Folio of Shakespeare's works ( 1623 ) but the roles done by him are not known.

#### *Elizabethan Acting :*

It is very difficult at this distance of time to say anything categorically about the style of Elizabethan acting. There is no physical evidence



available, either any record of voices to give us an idea of the manner of delivery of speeches or dialogues, or any action-picture of plays to tell us about the gestures, movements, expressions of the players. Tape-records, motion-pictures, television etc. will keep the actors of today alive for to-morrow, but the actors of yesterday are gone for ever. In the absence, therefore, of direct evidence we have to depend upon authorities who have tried to go into the matter on the basis of documents and materials available and have made their own conjectures. Their conclusions, however, are different.

#### *Formal or Natural ?*

There is strong difference of opinion whether Elizabethan acting was formal or natural. According to Prof. Alfred Harbage, Elizabethan acting was formal—i.e. it depended upon conventional gestures, patterned movements, accepted modes of delivery etc. leaving no liberty to the actor to strike his own path to convey a feeling or suggest a mood or portray a character, liberty which is so essential to 'natural' acting. The 'formal' actor recites as one reads a book, the 'natural' actor talks as one does in life. The supporters of the formal-acting-theory point out that in the Elizabethan period there were schools for oratory and "oratory and acting utilised similar techniques of voice and gesture". For different moods or feelings there were fixed and well-defined gestures and movements, expressions, both for speech-making as well as acting. Everything depended upon quick and correct delivery of words. There was no scope for innovation. The style was declamatory and the actor played to the audience around him and not to his fellow-actors on the stage.

On the other hand, B.L. Joseph, in his *Elizabethan Acting*, concludes that Elizabethan acting was not formal. While agreeing that the Elizabethan actor had "the delivery of an orator", B.L. Joseph adds that he had also "the ability to be the character." "The actor", says he, "was identified; he behaved as if he was the imaginary character come to life." "It was for this kind of acting", continues he, "that Burbage and Alleyn were praised." Joseph quotes Richard Flecknoe who described Burbage as a "delightful Proteus". Flecknoe speaks of Burbage as one whose acting involved what was done by contemporary orators—"animating words with speech, and speech with action." In external action too, i.e. "in the use of voice, countenance and gesture to communicate what had already been expressed in words by the author or was being expressed by the actor on the stage, the orator and the actor agreed." "Yet", says B.L. Joseph, "there was nothing stereotyped, stiff or formal about this external action." On the contrary, it was "lively, familiar and natural." In the

Grammar school—and almost all the Elizabethan actors had the grammar-school background—the boys were instructed to act lively and naturally. “For the orator as for the stage-actor the function of ‘external action’ was to express naturally and completely what was felt truthfully.” “The orator off the stage and the actor on it had to be able to express in action what was really felt.” This is anything but formal acting. It is the natural style of acting, though it must be admitted, not natural in the modern sense. “Hold the mirror up to nature”—this is the essence of natural acting.

Attempt has been made to hold the middle view by some scholars who are of the opinion that Elizabethan acting was formal when long speeches were delivered, and informal during brief dialogues. Others hold that it was a mixture all through, “the rigidity of formalism and the fluidity of naturalism judiciously blended.”

#### *Some Features of Elizabethan Acting :*

Though it is difficult to come to any definite conclusion as to whether Elizabethan acting was formal or natural, some guesses have been made from some undisputed facts. The facts are—

Firstly, though there were a number of entertaining elements in early Elizabethan drama like music, song, dance, clowning, fencing, etc. the chief pleasure was, according to Allardyce Nicoll, in the “harmony of words.” “Words were”, says Nicoll, “the true things of wonder and magic, and under the guidance of the book-holder or prompter, the performers spoke these words.” And, it may be pointed out that in the context of the Renaissance and the newly-awakened awareness of the possibility of the native tongue after a long period of domination by Latin and French, English words had assumed a force and an importance that they never had.

Secondly, Rhetoric was a popular subject of study and all young learners were taught the elements of oratory. Rhetorical delivery was a common enough feature, and the great tragic actors, consistently with public demand and preference, were naturally inclined to the manner of an orator on the stage. Taken to excess, this naturally appeared ridiculous, and hence Shakespeare’s warning, through Hamlet, to the wandering players, who often out-Heroded Herod ; to the robustious periwig-pated fellow who tore a passion to tatters, splitting the ears of the groundlings and so on.

Thirdly, the acting tradition of the inn-yard and open-space plays persisted at least for some time. And that acting, from the very circumstances of the case, had to be 'loud' or declamatory in nature so that words from the improvised platform might reach the big assembly that turned out 'to hear' plays.

Fourthly, consistently with the age, Elizabethan drama had a richness and vigour which often ran into extravagance, as Nicoll has rightly pointed out. Strong passion, powerful emotion, heroic energy rather than subtle psychology, refined sentiment or subdued feelings characterised Elizabethan drama. This afforded scope for declamatory acting. The Elizabethan plays aimed at acting or theatrical effects above everything else. The Elizabethan theatre was the actor's theatre. "At the heart of the dramatic presentation stood the actor", as G. Barker puts it, and the actor alone, unaided by scenery, light or sound-effects or other gimmicks with which we are familiar today and which have made the actor only a part of the whole, sometimes a very insignificant part. The Elizabethan actor was thoughtfully provided with words, "picturesque, sonorous and provocative words," in lieu of scenery, light and all that. On the effective delivery of words depended the success of the play and the fame of the player.

And finally, the design of the stage,—the platform stage with its three sections, the front, the inner and the upper stage, and the audience on three sides,—also determined the style of contemporary acting. The Elizabethan theatre was not the intimate theatre of today with limited number of numbered seats, polished, polite and peaceful patrons, and cleverly-manipulated audio-visual mechanisms. It was a theatre that conveyed more to the ear than to the eye. The Elizabethan actor's task was to reach the words to those who were on the three sides of the stage. His style of acting was conditioned by this factor.

#### *From Formal to Natural :*

All the above factors would lead to the conclusion that the style of acting had to be formal or oratorical, at least in the beginning. Gradually it changed. It is a fact that the style of acting depends on the available stuff to be acted. Bernard Beckermann in his *Shakespeare at the Globe* has referred to this transition in the style of Elizabethan acting. "In the plays of 1560's and 1570's", says Beckermann, "the verse was regular and conventional. The galloping fourteenner left little opportunity for nuance. The actor who rendered such verse (as in Cambises) was encouraged in the conventional expression of emotion and reliance upon rhythmic sweep

for success." This argues for formal acting. The character of verse, he next points out, gradually changed with the entry of Marlowe and Shakespeare, and the acting-style too changed more and more to the natural. This will be evident from Shakespeare's directive, through Hamlet (Act 3 Sc2) to the players of his time, which may be summed up like this: "speak the speech trippingly on the tongue" avoiding the manner of "the town-crier"; "do not saw the air too much with your hand, but use all gently"; "in the very torrent, tempest, and whirlwind of passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness"; "do not tear a passion to tatters to split the ears of the groundlings"; avoid "o'erdoing Tarmagant" or "out-Heroding Herod" etc. But there is also a warning against too tame a sort of acting. "Be not too tame neither." The important thing is discretion in acting—and this is a pointer to the natural style. As Shakespeare next puts it—"Suit the action to the word, the word to the action; O'erstep not the modesty of nature." Then comes the most important pronouncement when it is said that "the purpose of playing is to hold, as it were, the mirror up to nature." It is clear that Shakespeare was making out a case for the transformation of the acting style, from the formal to the natural.

### *The Actor's Task :*

The Elizabethan theatre was, we have said, the Actor's Theatre. The audience-attention was on the central figure on the stage who dominated the stage. Others in the scene with him, unless it was a mob-scene, were only subsidiary. The chief business of the actor was to hold the attention of the audience by creating an illusion of reality. This illusion, he was taught from his grammar-school days, could be created only by *being* the character he was doing. He was taught that he could not rouse a particular emotion in his listeners unless he felt it himself. The actor, therefore, had to *identify* himself with his role.

In so far as the Elizabethan actor got no support from the stage which a modern actor does, his task was not easy. The actor's entrance and stepping forward had to be theatrical enough, and not mere walking. His voice was to reach an audience of average one thousand. Again, when the audience was almost all upon him, as it were, from three sides, how difficult it was to create in them an illusion that he is Macbeth or Lady Macbeth or any other dramatic character, particularly in the absence of necessary aids. While going to murder Duncan when Macbeth says: "Now o'er the one half-world/Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams

abuse/The curtain'd sleep" etc., there was the light of day all a round. The illusion of time or space had therefore to be created by the ability of the actor. He, however, got support from two sides. The playwright gave him appropriate words to create necessary effect by his skilful delivery of them. The audience too was prepared for a "willing suspension of disbelief," and imagine the "wooden O" as the "vast field of France" or look upon the mere shadows as substance. (Cf. Shakespeare's apology in *Henry V* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, for imperfections of the stage.) The comic actor, however, who had not many words to say, depended on a little bit of bodily action to create audience interest in the manner of a circus joker of today. Tarlton and Will Kemp did their clowning with a gusto. On a platform stage where subtleties of wit or sharpness of repartees were likely to be lost, some amount of horse-play did the trick. As theatre became more intimate the style changed.

An Elizabethan play was roughly a "two hours traffic." The acting, therefore, had to be quick. Even though no time was lost for change of scenery or for arrangements of properties or props on the stage, still the five-act plays needed swift delivery of words by the players. And it was the actor's task to convey to his audience, even by his swift delivery the meaning or the substance of the whole thing. We are to remember that the audience consisted of a majority that had only elementary education. Except in the cases of the chronicle plays where the story might have been familiar, the task of the actor was really difficult because he had to make known to his patrons what was unknown to them. There was no printed programme with an outline of the story as we have now. Leaving aside minute details the actor tried to convey the story above everything else. Until the emergence of Marlowe the greater emphasis in a play was on the story; and the actor brought it home to the audience by means of conventional gestures, movements, recitations which they could understand thanks to their play-going experience. "It seems to me," writes Joseph, "that the Elizabethan actors were able to perform more swiftly than modern actors and to communicate much more completely, not only because their audience was more accustomed to listening, but because of their own training and abilities as actors." The arrival of Shakespeare made the actor's task more difficult. "Shakespeare," says Beckermann, "gave his actors too rich a variety of emotions, of too fine a subtlety to permit them to rely upon stock rendition of outworn conventions." But Shakespeare had his Richard Burbage and Robert Armin.

The Elizabethan actor had also to handle a number of things skilfully on the stage, such as, soliloquies and asides, roles of ghosts and

supernatural beings, observation and disguise scenes, also battle-scenes and processions etc. These were very frequent in Elizabethan plays and needed proper rendering. The actors were not found wanting.

The Elizabethan Age was a romantic age and the stage was not outside the romantic influence. The style of acting, formal or natural, or a blending of both, was, in essence, romantic, with grace, beauty and colour. The theatre was a new experience. The actors had their admirers and the acting drew large crowds.

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## SHAKESPEARE AND THE EUPHUISTIC NOVELS

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D. C. BISWAS

### I

John Lyly's *Euphues* is a mirror of manners and a model of elegant speech, and in both respects it is an example of a new sophistication. The manners are derived from the courtly culture and, as to style, it is in some way, not yet exactly defined, associated with the Spanish style known as *Oratio aulica*. The attention to fineness and pomp of phrase is of course a general result of the revived study of the classics and the balanced oratorical prose of Cicero and Seneca. Euphuism represents the culminating point in the general tendency to write with charm and precision, with ornament and culture, at a time when Englishmen desired "to heare finer speach than the language would allow"<sup>1</sup>. Much of it is conscious artistry, the painful expression of a calculating scholar. For example, Lyly aimed at precision and emphasis, in the first place, by carefully balancing his words and phrases, by using rhetorical questions, by alliteration and further wordplay. For ornament, in the second place, he turned mainly to allusions and similes of various kinds drawn from Pliny and Plutarch. But his most daring ornamentation lies in the wholesale introduction of recondite knowledge, viz, from folklore, medicine, magic. And this mixture of quaint device and naive science resulted in a style which became fashionable in England in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century.

The chase for a particular source of Euphuism which continued almost unremittingly throughout the second half of the nineteenth century has now been given up. Ever since the publication of Professor Morley's article in *Quarterly Review*, April, 1861 and more particularly, Dr Landmann's book *Euphuismus* in 1881, attempts have been made to hunt it down to one source or other. For example, Dr Landmann maintains that Lyly's Euphuism is an adaptation from the Spanish writer Antonio de Guevara<sup>2</sup>, whose *alto estilo* exhibited many of Lyly's special marks, such as parallelism of sentences, the marking of corresponding words by consonance and rhyme, antithesis, and rows of similes

taken from nature rather than Pliny. Dr Landmann, however, acknowledges the intervention of Sir Thomas North, whose *Dial of Princes* is a translation of Guevara's *Libro Aureo* from an intermediate French version, and also of George Pettie (*Palace of Pleasure*, 1576), for the addition of alliteration which is not to be found in the Spanish writer. T. W. Bond<sup>3</sup> on the other hand, thinks that "whatever Guevara's share in inducing in England a style, the like of which appeared in several countries about the same time, it is essential to emphasize the far closer resemblance to Euphuism in the case of North and Pettie". And of the two, it is North "who must be regarded as the real founder of our Euphuistic literary fashion". But "whatever Lyly's debt to North in point of subject-matter", Bond adds, he owes little to him "in point of style" and Pettie is "an exact model of the style of *Euphues*". While recognizing Pettie's rhetoric as an example of the fully developed Euphuism, C. S. Lewis<sup>4</sup> is of opinion that Euphuism as a structural decoration alternative to inkhorn decoration of vocabulary is the result of gradual emergence. And "what constitutes euphuism", C. S. Lewis adds, "is neither the structural devices, nor the 'unnatural history' but the unremitting use of both. The excess is the novelty; the euphuism of any composition is a matter of degree."

Without going into the details of Lyly's structural devices, which T. W. Bond, and M. W. Croll & Harry Clemons have done in their editions of Lyly's works, it may be useful to turn to the *Oxford English Dictionary* for a working definition of Euphuism.

### *Euphuism*

1. Properly, the name of a certain type of diction and style which originated in the imitation of Lyly's *Euphues*, and which was fashionable in literature and in the conversation of cultivated society at the end of the 16th and beginning of the 17th century. Hence applied to any similar kind of affectation in writing or speech, and (loosely) to affectedly periphrastic or 'high flown' language in general.

The chief features of 'euphuism' in the proper sense are : the continual recurrence of antithetic clauses in which the antithesis is emphasized by alliteration; the frequent introduction of a long string of similes all relating to the same subject, often drawn from the fabulous ascribed to plants, minerals, and animals; and the constant endeavour after subtle refine-



ment of expression. The sense in which (exc. in books on literary history) the word is now commonly used, is chiefly suggested by the absurd bombast which Scott puts into the mouth of Sir Piercie Shafton (who is described as a 'Euphuist') in *The Monastery*: this caricature, however, bears very little resemblance to the genuine 'euphuism'. Some loose uses of the word can hardly be accounted for exc. by supposing that the writers (recognizing the familiar prefix eu-) had the notion that its etymological sense was 'fine talking' or something equivalent.

So, 'Euphuism', in its wider sense, stands for any linguistic affectation, the artificial or the studied display of the fineness of language. Be it a 'vocal ornament'<sup>6</sup> or 'inkhorn decoration', Euphuism involves ornamentation, the surplusage or the non-essential. In other words, it is a style in which the form exceeds the matter. Speaking of literary style Pater<sup>6</sup> comments that it should be independent of all removable decoration; actually "it is impossible to detach the form from the idea, for the idea only exists by virtue of the form" (Flaubert as quoted by Pater). This inseparable connection between the form and the idea or the words and their meaning has also been emphasized by the great Indian poet Kalidasa in the opening verse of his *Raghuvansham*:

Vāgarthābība Samprktau Vāgartha Pratīpattayē  
Jagataḥ pītarau bandē Pārvatī Paramēṣvarau

For the acquisition of words and their meanings I bow down to Parvati and Parameswara—the parents of the Universe—who are inseparably connected with each other like a word and its meaning. So, the effort after elaboration, or the use of words in excess of the meaning, the form exceeding the matter, may, generally speaking, be termed as a tendency to Euphuism. It is the element of exaggeration in Lyly that attracted notice. He harped on the string perpetually to weariness, and in his devotion to form he forgot its large dependence on matter.

There are so many characteristics of Lylyan Euphuism enumerated by T. W. Bond and others. But the most dominant trait noticed alike in the *Oxford English Dictionary* and by all other writers is "the continual recurrence of antithetic clauses", which renders an architectural design to Lyly's prose. For example, we may quote one of the innumerable passages in Lyly:

Alas, Euphues, by how much the more I love the high climbing  
of thy capacitie, by so much the more I feare thy fall. The

fine christall is sooner crazed than the harde marble, the greenest Beeche burneth faster than the Dryest Oke, the fairest silke is soonest soyled, and the sweetest wine tourneth to the sharpest vinegar...

In the structure of his sentences Lyly seeks emphasis by antithesis, which, as regards form, might usually be called parallelism. "The method of ornament and illustration which, though properly considered as part of style, are yet more akin to the material than to the architecture of thought"<sup>7</sup>.

It will now be our endeavour to show that in Euphuistic novels generally and in Lyly in particular the stylistic devices viz, antithesis and parallelism, are not confined to the structure of the sentences alone, but are a part of the larger architectural design on which the novels have been built. To be more precise, the content is largely determined by the form, which however becomes more complex with Greene and Lodge than with Lyly because of the simultaneous influence of Sidney's *Arcadia*. Lodge's *Rosalynde : Euphues Golden Legacie* is set in *Arcadia* and in *Menaphon* Greene acknowledges his double debt to Lyly and Sidney, presenting his story to "Euphues in his cell at Silexandra" and by placing his scene in *Arcadia*.

Apart from the stylistic devices the euphuistic novels have some common qualities : the story, usually thin, is spun out by interminable repetitions in parallel situations which emphasize the didactic element. For example, Lyly's *Euphues, the Anatomy of Wit* (1578) has a flimsy story which is but a trellis to support endless didacticism. The scenes, eleven in number, are laid in drawing rooms, and there is little action : the conflict is mainly mental and verbal rather than external. In a preliminary scene Euphues is rebuked by an old man for his frivolity ; but like all young heroes in the euphuistic novels—viz, Philautus in *Euphues and His England* (1580), who pays no heed to old Fidus' warning against love ; or Saladyne in Lodge's novel defying his dead father's instructions : or Greene's hero *Menaphon* acting against the voice of his conscience—Euphues acts contrarily : falls in love with an Italian lady by betraying his friend. He is, in turn, betrayed by the lady who shifts her affection to a third man much inferior in birth. The two friends are now reconciled and Euphues in remorse writes a 'Cooling Card for lovers' which is intended as a warning to his friend. The antithetical pattern is largely supported by parallelism of the two parts of *Euphues*. The theme of reckless youth warned by old age represented by Euphues and Eubulus in

Part I is repeated in Cassander and Callemachus and in Fidus and Philautus in part II. Similarly, Euphues' disappointment in love is repeated in those of Fidus and Philautus in part II. In each part there is a rift in friendship followed by reconciliation.

Part II however marks a distinct advance in art because more space is given in it for action: voyages and journeys are described; the manners, customs and government in England are discussed; but the situations in general are repetitious. The inset story of Cassander and Callemachus, the rich old man and his only son, is paralleled by the first generation story of the old dying father and his two sons, Cassander and his younger brother, the hermit. Callemachus, like his uncle, the hermit, returns from his travel with bitter experience—"his mind infected with his body, his time consumed with his treasure, nothing won but what he cannot lose though he would—misery". So not only are the evils of foreign travel emphasized by parallel incidents of two generations, but the need of experience and foresight in controlling the rashness of youth is simultaneously recognized.

Coming now to the theme of disappointment in love Lyly adopts the same device in the second part of his novel as he has done in the first. Finding Philautus oppressed with melancholy Fidus recalls his own bitter experience in love: how ineffective had been his wooing of Iffida who proved much too clever for him. Asked by the lady in sport as to whom he would choose as his bride—a very fair but foolish girl, or a marvellously witty but yet marvellously wanton, or a virtuous but deformed girl, Fidus showed his preference for the witty wanton. But this joke meant to amuse the lady had the only effect of giving her a handle against her lover. And when Fidus played the same trick on her enquiring of her preference for one of the three suitors—the first handsome, the second witty and the third enormously rich, the lady sportively wriggled out of the difficulty by preferring the suitor who would be a combination of all three: beauty to please the eye, wit to please the ear, and wealth to comfort the heart. Being pressed to choose but one of the three given alternatives, she gave her verdict in favour of the third—the man with enormous wealth, which she knew Fidus had not. So the sophisticated love game ended in frustration which brought Fidus near death. Recollecting his own pangs of love which drove him to lifelong solitude he warned Philautus against love's deceptive snares:

You see what Love is—begun with grief, continued with sorrow, ended with death; a pain full of pleasure, a joy

replenished with misery, a Heaven, a Hell, a God or Devil, and what not ...

But neither the old man's warning nor his friend's 'Cooling card' had any effect on Philautus who fell straightway in love with the English girl Camilla. And when nothing availed—neither wooing in masque nor through letters, Philautus in remorse turned to his friend Euphues with whom he was reconciled once again.

It may be pertinent here to state that the heroes and heroines of Lyly's novel belong to high society with its set pattern of sophisticated behaviour and language, just as pastoral lovers have their own code of conduct approved by the literary convention of which Sidney's *Arcadia* is an exponent. But "in spite of its title and its reputation the elements of Romance and Pastoral in the *Arcadia* are not of primary importance. The pastoral setting is merely decorative"<sup>8</sup>. It serves as a poetical interlude to the multifarious incidents, inset stories, moral disquisitions with which the plot is filled to overflowing. There is nonetheless a repetitive pattern which is particularly noticeable in the musical inter-chapters, which with their innumerable songs, madrigals, with the shepherd boy piping "as though he would never be old" have such a stylized quality as to mark them off from the main narrative with which they are imperfectly blended.

In an illuminating book recently published, Northrop Frye writes of the conventions of prose-romance, which show little change throughout the centuries. He has noticed some of the characteristic elements of the Greek romances repeated fifteen centuries after in *Guy Mannering* :

In the Greek romances we find stories of mysterious birth, oracular prophecies about the future contortions of the plot, foster parents, adventures which involve capture by pirates, narrow escapes from death, recognition of the true identity of the hero and his eventual marriage with the heroine<sup>9</sup>.

With the composition of Sidney's *Arcadia* (1580) the "oracle" entered into English literature and Greene used it in two of his romances : *Pandosto* (1588) and *Menaphon* (1589). Apart from the oracular motif, there are many ingredients of the Greek romance, viz adventures, narrow escapes from death, revelation of the identity of the hero and his eventual marriage with the heroine, to be found in both Sidney and Greene. Greene's romances in particular reveal more fully all the characteristic qualities of the Greek romance. This, in fact, is a further confirmation of the repetitive pattern that I have traced in the euphuistic novels in general.

The style of *Arcadia*<sup>10</sup> is also antithetical, alliterative and balanced although Sidney had no patience for Lyly's "similiter cadences" by which he apparently meant the word-schemes and far-fetched metaphors. (Compare Sidney's *Apologie for Poetrie*—later sections where he writes on the artificial nature of the contemporary verse and prose.) Nevertheless the Arcadian style is stilted, somewhat affected. There is, for example, the use of fine words to lend a false dignity to simple action. Compare the passage describing the death of Parthenia, who disguised as the Knight of the Tomb had been mortally wounded by Amphialus :

But the headpiece was no sooner off, but that there fell about the shoulders of the overcome knight the treasure of fair golden hair, which with the face, soon known by the badge of excellency, witnessed that it was Parthenia, the unfortunately virtuous wife of Argalus ; her beauty then, even in despite of the passed sorrow or coming death, assuring all beholders that it was nothing short of perfection.

Although the opening lines extol the attractions of Arcadia for "the moderate and well tempered myndes of the people" who follow "the course of nature," what actually induced Basilus to renounce the court was not the superior charm of country life but his dread of losing the crown to a foreign power, his elder daughter being stolen and the younger "embracing an uncouth love", all of which the Delphic oracle had predicted. His dialogue with his wise counsellor Philanax shows that his consulting the oracle has been indiscreet and his shirking of administrative responsibility a cowardly action :

I would then have saide unto you that wisdom and vertue be the onely destinyees appointed to man to follow, wherein one oughte to place all his knowledge.

\* \* \*

Why shoulde you deprive youre self of governing your Dukedome for fear of losing youre Dukedome, like one that should kill himself for fear of deathe ?

And it is to prevent Basilus from "his burying himself alyve" and to persuade him to return "to employ his oulde yeares in doing good" that brought his friend Evarchus to Arcadia (Book V).

So, the ideal of life which *Arcadia* seems to uphold is the Renaissance ideal of action, and not the Arcadian ideal of retirement. In fact, Basilus' indulgence in Arcadian bliss when the country needed his participation

in state-affairs is but an aberration, which shows the imbecility of his mind. This is further confirmed by his foolish dependence on the idiotic rustic Dametas for the protection of his daughter Pamela, whose abduction had been predicted by the Oracle, and his own inability to see through Pyrocles' disguise. Indeed so great is his infatuation for the disguised prince that he becomes a laughable victim of his clever ruse : he solicits the aid of his daughter to press his love-suit to her lover, and finally finds himself in the farcical situation of mistaking his wife for the supposed mistress.

No less crude is the metamorphosis of the two young princes, Musidorus and Pyrocles, who after having performed the wonderful feats of killing a dragon and bringing succour to distressed ladies are no sooner come to Arcadia than they are transformed to sighing lovers, one assuming the disguise of an amazon woman, another attending the ridiculous rustic as his servant in the guise of a swain. But what actually brings them to the notice of the princesses is their heroic feat in killing a lion and quelling a riotous mob by skill in arms and oratory : the typical accomplishments of the Renaissance hero. Even then the young lovers had no smooth course. Musidorus had to prove his refinement to the princess Pamela by means of a clever subterfuge : on the pretext of proposing love to the silly Mopsa he spoke in a polished and exalted manner, and made a present of a golden altar dedicated to Pollux with the Latin inscription—*Sic vos non vobis*. Still, nothing would convince the sophisticated lady about the nobility of his birth till he had revealed his identity as a prince with the credentials of letters received from his homestate. The younger princess Philoclea, more simple being less experienced in life, felt an instinctive attraction for the disguised prince Pyrocles, who, however, had little access to her being the object of simultaneous infatuation of Basilius and his queen. When at last by means of a clever trick he had the princess alone by him as the supposed emissary of her father's love, he did not miss the opportunity of revealing his noble ancestry :

I say, I say, O onely Princes attend here a myserble mirackle  
of affection, behold here before youre eyes Pyrocles, Prince  
of Macedon, whome onely yow have broughte to this falle of  
fortune and unused Metamorphose whome you onely have  
made neglect his country, forgett his father and lastly forsake  
hym self.

Thus the princes and princesses carry their sophistication to the Arcadian haunts, where the real inhabitants who come to life are the

ridiculous, one-eyed, hunch-backed buffoon Dametas, his shrewish wife and the silly daughter. They alone have been knitted into the fabric of the main story, serving as broadly farcical parallels to the main characters. Like Pyrocles playing on the absurd infatuation of Basilus and the queen, Musidorus too played on the greed of the rustic, the jealousy of his wife and the foolish matrimonial phobia of the daughter, till Dametas was found vainly digging at the root of a tree in search of hidden treasure, his wife kicking up a row at the nearby town in jealous rage and the silly daughter at the top of a tree, her eyes bandaged, expecting Apollo to speak to her. The other rustics who figure in the story are the revellers at night who fled like frightened beasts at the approach of the lion, or the drunken rout who while observing the Duke's birthday suddenly turned in fury to kill him or burn him alive. Even the pastoral entertainment with its community songs and dances borders on the farcical with the buffoon acting as its director :

And him self stood like a Director over them, with nodding,  
gaping, wincking or shewing how he did like or myslike those  
things hee did not understand.

The best specimen of the rustic entertainer, Lalus compares unfavourably with Dorus (Musidorus) when they come to describing their respective mistress in pleasant conceits. Lalus compares his ladylove, Kala, with a lamb, a cony etc.

Mylde as a lambe, more deynty than a cony ys,  
Her eyes my eye sighte ys, her conversacyon,  
More glad to mee, then to Myser money ys.

Dorus' description has on the whole an ethereal quality about it and is more sophisticated. He says he cannot describe her being herself the collection of best things : "She ys herself of best things the collection." This is followed by a grotesque representation of Cupid by the shepherd Dicus—Cupid wearing tattered rags through which one might see his body being full of eyes, his head horned and having long ears, his feet cloven and out of his mouth hangs a lace which holds the picture of a handsome man and a fair woman. Although this provoked mirth in the king and his companions, the superstitious rustics disliked the blasphemy ; and one among them narrated Cupid's vindictive rage in course of which the two princes, Musidorus and Pyrocles, are brought into the picture as deliverers of the victims of the angry god. So, the past exploits come to be thinly linked with the present, the central characters being the

same. But the effect of such inset stories is to establish the main story as one of a category, giving it a broad significance. The parallelism seems to emphasize the heroic theme of the novel which has Arcadian setting as merely an embroidery.

In fact the heart of *Arcadia*, as C.S. Lewis has noted, is the nobility of its sentiments. The two young heroes are magnanimous friends and noble lovers who have an exalted notion of virtue from which they do not swerve even at the successive assaults of feminine allurements. When at long last they succumb to a momentary impulse, it is to a lady to whom each has been united in affection. But this single lapse (mentioned in *Old Arcadia* and omitted in the Folio edition—1593) comes in for severe condemnation according to the strict laws of Arcadia as administered by the uncompromising moralist Evarchus who has no hesitation in sentencing his only son to death. Even Gynecia, the queen, who represents the spectacle of a woman helplessly wriggling like a fish hooked in the ardour of her passion, is not without a painful awareness of the atrociousness of her action. And the moment she realizes that she has unwittingly administered poison to her husband she is overwhelmed by a sense of guilt. Basilus recovering from his stupor gives a happy turn to the story which ends with general reunion and reconciliation in the manner of the pastoral. One wonders if the conventional pastoral romance has such an exalted code of morality!

The remarkable thing is that the nobility of behaviour and sentiments is represented by the intruders to Arcadia and not by its actual inhabitants, the two groups, between whom there is almost an unbridgeable gulf. The intriguing courtiers are yet capable of nobility; if the simple rustics are free from intrigues they are also incapable of the nobility of their betters. The Arcadians have their simple joys and a simplicity of outlook, which sometimes borders on idiocy. Sidney's preference is unmistakable. He has set a standard of manners which is as much sophisticated as it is exalted.

As we turn from Lyly and Sidney to Lodge we notice the double influence of his predecessors. In *Rosalynde, Euphues Golden Legacie*<sup>11</sup> (1590) Lodge repeats the Lylyan antithesis, zoological similes and parallel cadences, but the story is pastoral. There is a change in love's sequel from frustration to fulfilment in conformity with the pastoral convention. Although there is a good deal of euphuistic devices both in the language and the form of the novel and no lack of didacticism, the latter loses its point in being but an overcautious warning against the dangers of love,



which the lovers have done well to have left unheeded. For example, there are warnings against the snares of love voiced almost in identical terms by persons who are as much different in age and status as the old knight Sir John of Bordeaux, the princess Rosalynd and the Virgilian shepherd Coridon.

Sir John of Bordeaux :

.....beware of Love, fore, it is faree more perillous than pleasant, and yet I tell you fancie is a fickle thing, and beauteous paintings are trickt up with times colours, which being set to drie in the Sunne, perish with the same.

Coridon : Ah Lorrel lad, what makes thee harry love ?

A sug'red harm, a poyson full of pleasure,  
A painted shrine ful-fild with rotten treasure,  
A heaven in shew, a hell to them that prove.

Rosalynd : Beware fonde girle Seest thou not how Venus seeks to wrap thee in her laborynth, wherein is pleasure at the entrance, but within, sorrowes, cares and discontent ; She is a Syren, stop thine eares...at her melodie, and a Basiliscke, shut thine eyes...

In repeating the warning against love which serves no purpose Lodge has been merely following a convention. So do the three love-episodes all conform to a popular pattern in the Renaissance literature, and basically they are all alike. For example, there is little to choose between the Rosalynd-Rosader and the Alinda-Saladyne episodes, for each of the lovers is an adventurer who does impossible feats, and being smitten by love is suddenly exalted to poetic mood. But the Rosalynd-Rosader episode being longer gives a fuller picture of the romantic-pastoral convention. So long as Rosader is at the court, he is engaged in a series of adventures, feels the 'sacred flame of love' at the first exchange of glances with Rosalynd, and like a medieval knight derives encouragement from the lady's eyes as he wrestles with the king's wrestler. But as he enters Arden, he falls in line with the pastoral convention and his behaviour and even his language are not very different from those of the shepherd Montanus. Both Rosader and the shepherd express the pangs of heart in eclogues, one to his mistress and the other to the Virgilian shepherd Coridon. Like Phoebe, Rosalynd also assumes the attitude of a disdainful mistress even though she has been deeply in love, and describes the object of Rosader's love as a scornful maiden who will never condescend to love him and proposes that he should rather seek the hand of Alinda. She assumes romantic

postures, refining on the philosophy of love and also repeating some of the phrases with which the shepherd Coridon has cautioned Montanus against the snares of love.

So, it is the conventional pastoral love-making that is repeated in all the three love stories. Not only do the intruders feel the superior charm of the sylvan retreat, they also embrace the way of life, repeat the words and even the behaviour-pattern of the children of the soil, which have been approved by Theocritus and Virgil.

Greene's *Menaphon*<sup>12</sup> is a Euphuistic novel which exhibits the Lylyan love for parallel, antithetical sentences and fine phrases ; it is also a pastoral romance set in the promontory of Arcady where shepherds and shepherdesses make their love in eclogues, and a mysterious prophetic appearing at the end brings about the fulfilment of the oracular pronouncement with which the novel started.

The repetitive pattern that we noticed in Lyly and Lodge acquires a new dimension because of the element of rivalry in love, which simultaneously brings into focus the contrast between the court and the country. The central story of the ship-wrecked princess Saphestia wooed alike by the shepherd Menaphon and her own unrecognized husband Melicertus is further complicated by the incestuous passion of the heroine's father and son who are enamoured of her beauty. There is also the subsidiary episode of Doron and Carmela, two simple rustics, whose love-affair sets off the main story by contrast. Running parallel to the central story are the episodes of the Thessalian princess Olympia and the shepherdess Pasena, the two stand-by girls, who serve the purpose of bringing about a happy conclusion by the general pairing off of the lovers—"lest there should be left anything unperfect in this pastoral accident".

Thus the theme of frustrated love implicit in amorous rivalry is given a new turn by Greene. But this would not have been possible without the introduction of the supernatural, which Greene might have borrowed from Sidney. Greene was however no mere imitator : he surpassed both his models, Lyly and Sidney. Though he shared Lyly's love for balanced sentences, alliteration etc. he does not spoil his work by excessive use of them, nor does he sacrifice the story to mere decoration or to a moral lesson. Such a complicated plot with its whirling movement leaves little room for verbal jugglery and moral disquisitions. Even so, there are echoes of Lyly in the early part of the story, but these become comparatively scarce as the story advances.

Menaphon thy minds favours are greater than thy wealth's fortunes, thy thoughts higher than thy birth, and thy private concept better than thy publique esteem.

Love Menaphon, why of all follies that ever poets fained, or even men faulted with, this foolish imagination of love is the greatest.

One cannot miss the antithetical balance, the alliterative jingle of the euphuistic style, of which the succeeding passage affords better illustration in curious parallels :

Saphestia : Sweet Lamedon, once partner of my royalties, now partaker of my wants, as constant in extreme distresse, as faithful in higher fortunes : the Turtle pearketh not on barren trees, doves delight not in foule cottages, the Lyon frequents no putrified haunts, friends followe not after pouvertie, nor hath sinister chance anie drugges from the phisitians.

Ménaphon attracted by the exquisite beauty of Saphestia takes her to his protection and there is a free movement in the language which becomes more or less free from decoration till they develop a mutual attraction for each other. Menaphon's avowal of love brings forth Saphestia's reply in the typical euphuistic parallels :

...I see by prooffe there is no adamant so harde, but the blood of a Goate will make soft ; no forte so wel defenced, but the strong batterie will enter ; nor any heart so pliant to restless labours, but enchantment of love will overcome.

Significant in this connection is the fact that there are fewer euphuistic parallels put into the mouth of the shepherd Menaphon than in the mouth of the shipwrecked princess whose refinement of mind is tested by Melicertus, another intruder to Arcadia, in terms of verbal ornamentation. At the shepherds' feast in which Saphestia is elected 'Mistress of the Feast' because of her unparalleled beauty, she was asked what shape, if metamorphosed, she would assume. Her preference for the sheep is symbolic of her assumed role.

Daphne I remember was turned to a bay tree, Niobe to a flint, Lampetia and her sisters to flowers and sundri virgins to sundri shapes according to their merites but if my wish might serve for a Metamorphosis, I would be turned to a

sheepe . my supposition should be simple, my life quiet, my food the pleasant plaines of Arcadie and wealthie riches of Flora, my drinke the Coole streames that flow from the concave promontorie of the continent, my aire should bee cleare, my walkes spacious.

Then follows a pretty wit-combat between Saphestia and Melicertus, which is set off by the broad jest between Menaphon and the shepherdess Pasena. This last would have sparked off to a squabble between them had not Saphestia intervening asked the tongue-tied rustic Doron his opinion about her choice. This provoked but a "blunt replie" from Doron who asked her whether in being a sheep she would be "a Ram or an Ewe". Consistently with the pastoral convention even Doron has been endowed with some music, but unlike Lodge whose Coridon and Montanus speak almost the same quality of verse as the sophisticated lovers, Doron's verse has a rustic vein, which the refined Melicertus detests.

Actually a line has been drawn between the shepherds and shepherdesses who have been born in the soil and the intruders who carry about them a court odour. Although the margin fades as we come to consider the language of Menaphon, who is recognized as the prince among the shepherds, there is no denying the superior refinement of Melicertus, which inclines Saphestia to change her mind in favour of him. In fact Melicertus' description of his mistress has a learned, sophisticated air about it : he compares his mistress with the "sun-bright Venus" whose "christall lookes the cloudie heavens do cleare", the "beauteous Thetis" wrapping the red body of the Titans. On the other hand, Menaphon's similes are homely having a mundane quality about them as when he compares his mistress' cheek to "ripened lillies, steept in wine/Or fair pomegranate kernel washt in milke". And lower down in the scale, Doron's down-to-earth realism in the description of his mistress sounds so grotesque :

Thy lippes resemble two cowcubers faire,  
Thy teeth like to the tuskes of the fattest swine,  
Thy speach is like the thunder in the aire :  
Would God thy toes, thy lips and all were mine.

No wonder that the disguised king Democles who acted as the judge to decide who should lead the assault gave his verdict in favour of Melicertus. For once at least linguistic ornamentation wins the laurels in

life as in love. It is indeed a part of the sophistication which Greene's enlightened readers might have enjoyed.

Nevertheless the attractiveness of Arcadian life which is free from the evils of the court is simultaneously recognized by a number of characters. For example, Democles, the disguised king, applauds the Arcadian blessings :

Arcadian swaines, whose wealth is content, whose labours are  
tempred with sweete loves, whose mindes aspyre not, whose  
thoughtes brooke no envie, only as rivalls in affection ..

And Saphestia, on her part, who had been the worst victim of a tyrannical court, shuns in horror what she calls "the hell of a court-life". But as her son Pleusidippus grows up somewhat too noble for the country surroundings, she feels the necessity of training him up for a more exalted station in life than Arcadia might afford.

On the whole Greene's attitude is more complex than that of Lodge. He does not borrow the pastoral convention uncritically. Despite its simplicity Arcadian life has also its crudities, and even its best specimen, Menaphon, after whom the novel has been named, accepts his defeat in verse-combat and ungrudgingly surrenders his claim over Saphestia to his sophisticated rival Melicertus. This is symbolic of Greene's attitude which his cultured readers might have appreciated.

## II

In passing from the prose-romances to Shakespeare's plays one is struck by the variety of Shakespeare's responses to his predecessors and also the complexity of his handling of the materials he borrowed from them. Shakespeare effaces the euphuism of style while following the matter of Lodge's *Rosalynde*, *Euphues Golden Legacie* in *As you Like It*, which, nonetheless, becomes much more complex because of the critical attitude he has added to it. In *Love's Labour's Lost*, on the other hand, Shakespeare reproduces the bombastic, grandiloquent, pedantic style, which sounds like a parody of euphuism, and also subtilizes the affectation through the manner and style of the sophisticated courtiers till the whole play becomes an attack on violation of nature by affectation of any kind, whether in speech or conduct.

Critics like W. L. Rushton<sup>13</sup> and T. W. Bond have traced the influence of Lyly on Shakespeare so far as the style or characterization is

concerned. While the former has discovered many parallel passages and even parallel characters in Shakespeare's plays, the latter has shown that the evidence of euphuistic style is more numerous in the middle period than in the earlier period. My purpose here is to show that Lyly's influence on Shakespeare was not restricted to language. Some of the dominant traits of euphuism, viz, antithesis and parallelism, are as important a part of the structural design of the plot of Lyly's novels as in that of Shakespeare's plays, particularly in *Love's Labour's Lost* and *As You Like It*.

*Love's Labour's Lost* has the flimsiest plot, which is amplified by continual repetition, artificial balancing of group against group and by the interminable wordplay and straining after wit. Just as in Lyly, there are dialogue-scenes, which do not advance the action but which exist chiefly for dialogue, for the display of alliteration, punning and wordplay. Corresponding to Lyly's didacticism, which the young heroes defying provide the novel its antithetical pattern, there is the academic vow, a self-imposed penance in *Love's Labour's Lost*. The king of Navarre induces a group of noble lords to go with him into intellectual retreat. They will for the space of three years shun the company of women, eat only one meal a day, fast a day every week, and sleep not more than three hours in the night. Some of these prescriptions might have been derived directly from Lyly. Euphuus' 'Cooling carde for Philautus and all fond lovers' contains some of the items. For example, admonishing young men to forswear the company of women Euphuus asks them to

Follow Alexander which hearing the commendation and singular comelyness of the wife of Darius, so courageously withstood the assaults of fancie, that he would not so much as take a viewe of hir beautie : Imitate Cyrus, a king indued with such continencie yt hee loathed to look on the heavenly hewe of Panthea, and when Araspus tolde him that she excelled all mortall wightes in amiable shewe, by so much the more (sayde Cyrus) I ought to absteine from hir sight, for if I follow thy counsayle in going to hir, it may bee I shall desire to continue with hir, and by my lyghte affection neglect my serious affairs (*Complete works of John Lyly*, vol. I, edited by T. W. Bond, p. 250.)

In an earlier scene of the novel Euphuus has been warned against women by the old Eubulus almost in identical terms which he now repeats in painful remorse for the better guidance of his friend. As Euphuus in

his rejoinder to the old man had mocked him : "you would have all men olde as you are", so does Berowne attacks the central creed of the academicians on two grounds, first because it is against nature to starve the emotion in order to enlighten the mind, and secondly, because it is so unseasonable for young people :

Why should I joy in an abortive birth ?  
At Christmas I no more desire a rose  
Than wish a snow in May's new-fangled shows ;  
But like of each thing that in season grows.

I. i. 104-7

Rather than shunning women or fasting himself Berowne would sooner study "where to meet some mistress fine" or "when he may well dine". Yet with the sure instinct that the whole academic discipline would fall through, the first item of which is going to be immediately broken as the French princess is due to visit Navarre for consulting state matters, Berowne allows himself to be caught in the toils of artifice just for the sake of enjoying the sport of it. So does Shakespeare duplicate the antithetical pattern to bring into focus the contrast between nature and artifice, realism and affectation on which the play is based.

What actually makes for the complexity in Shakespeare is his devising characters in groups, for example, the courtset and the country people with Armado acting as the link. This provides an opportunity for multiplication of parallel incidents, the alternating of one group with another and also for the episode of the misdelivery of letters by the blundering clown which gives the plot the only real complication it has.

No sooner is the King's proclamation abjuring the sight of women is made than Costard is discovered in the company of the rustic girl Jaquenetta—"sorted, consorted" contrary to proclamation "with a child of our grandmother Eve, a female". Look at the man's nonchalance when asked by the king if he has heard the proclamation—"I do confess much of the hearing it, but little of the marking of it". And the moment Costard has been sentenced to fasting with "bran and water" which he would fain exchange for "mutton and porridge", the other fellow, the accusing Spaniard to whose charge the rustic wench has been assigned falls in love with her, turns to sonneteering—"for I am for whole volumes in folio". These repeated infringements of the king's order show that none of the king's subjects took him seriously.

As to the sophisticated court group, as soon as they meet the French ladies they fall in love with them one after another, and as they fall in

love they at once turn to inditing sonnets, which each hiding from others is finally discovered—the whole thing looking like a ballet-dance—so symmetrical and repetitive it is ! They put on Muscovite masks, all of them, to gain access to their sweethearts, but repeat some conned phrases each to the wrong lady, for the ladies replying “sport with sport” have meanwhile exchanged their own masks. So they are only mocked at for their pains—“There’s no such sport as sport by sport o’thrown”. So, love’s labour’s lost—everything dashed like a “Christmas comedy”. The lovers would fain on their second visit exchange their “taffeta phrases, silken terms precise” for “russet yeas, and honest kersey noes”, but the opportunity has been missed. There is the sudden incursion of the sad news that the French king has been dead and the ladies must hurry home. The lovers are put on trial for one full year—they must prove their earnestness by doing penance in a hermitage or visiting the sick in hospitals. So artifice defeats its own purpose. Even the French princess, who is nothing if not critical, comes to feel that her witticism has overreached itself and chides herself for “bending the working of the heart” for “fame’ sake”.

This has its farcical parallel in Armado’s transformation from a pompous rhetorician to a plain, almost monosyllabic lover—his amorous condescension for the sake of the country wench !

Maid !  
 Man !  
 I will visit thee at the lodge.  
 That’s hereby.  
 I know where it is situate.  
 Lord, how wise you are !  
 I will tell thee wonders.  
 With what face ?  
 I love thee.  
 So I heard you say.  
 And so, farewell.  
 Fair weather after you !

I. 2. 115

Armado too on his part has vowed to hold the plough for three years for the sweet love of Jaquenetta “that is quick by him”.

The play acquires a complexity by its element of cross-satire, which seems to underline the antithetical pattern. The sophisticated group of



lovers is mocked at for their pains by the mocking French wenches. Armado, the refined traveller from Spain, dignified and mock melancholy, makes himself ridiculous by his affectation of the court air. As the king and his bookmen ridicule the verbal affectation of Armado and Holofernes, they too are ridiculed by Costard whose remark that it is "the simplicity of man to hearken after the flesh" is an unconscious criticism of the ascetic regulations formulated by the king. And even though Costard "infamonizes" Armado among the potentates Shakespeare actually gives him a dignity in humiliation. His affair with Jaquenetta is a parody of the courtly set, the only difference being that his is after all a love's labour's won as Costard saucily informs the audience in course of the anti-masque of the Nine Worthies. And the comedy of affectation coming to a close with the pastoral freshness points to the way Shakespeare's genius would be moving. In fact, *Love's Labour's Lost* is not only a satire of euphuism; the satire is directed against Lylyan sophistication in general, both of manners and style.

Just as there are two styles of wooing in the play—the sophisticated and the plain: "the taffeta phrases and silken terms precise" and "the russet yeas and honest kersey noes", the play has, generally speaking, two styles. Apparently, Shakespeare gives his verdict in favour of the plain style, his superfine courtiers—Proteus, Cassio, Parolles and Osric having been variously ridiculed. Dr Landmann thinks that the general moral of the play, *Love's Labour's Lost*, is that we are to recognize the homely necessity of fact and natural limitation.

"No egma, no riddle, no l'envoy, no salve in them all, Sir'.  
O Sir, plantain, a plain plantain... "a marvellous good  
neighbour, faith, and a very good bowler: but, for Alisander,  
—alas, you see how 'tis—a little O'erparted"

LLL: III. 1. 62 & V.2.575.

But the question of style in Shakespeare is not so easily answered. Many characteristics of style are caricatured in Shakespeare: poverty of phrase in Nym, bombast like Marlowe's in Pistol, overnicety of distinction in Launcelot, verbosity in Polonius. And as to euphuism in the truest sense of the term we have a parody of it in Falstaff:

Harry, I do not only marvel where thou spendest thy time,  
but also how thou art accompanied: for though the  
Camomile, the more it is trodden on the faster it grows, yet  
youth, the more it is wasted the sooner it wears... There

is a thing, Harry, which thou hast often heard of, and it is known to many in our land by the name of pitch. This pitch, as ancient writers do report, doth defile ; so doth the company thou keepest.\*

—Henry IV, Part I : II.4.351.

In *Love's Labour's Lost* the satire of linguistic affectation is somewhat more complex. As C. S. Lewis has noted, euphuism as a structural decoration alternative to inkhorn decoration is the result of gradual emergence. Considering the large infusion of foreign terms, the free coinage of Latinism which the language was undergoing at the period, Lyly may be called a purist in his comparative avoidance of foreign words. He turned to the resources of the English language to gratify the taste for fineness by means of antithesis, alliteration, balance, rhyme etc, all of which are never found together in one place. The play, *Love's Labour's Lost*, is certainly a satire of Lylyan euphuism along with that of inkhorn decoration, between which the distinction is more academic than material. In my opinion, as cited at the beginning, words in excess of matter, i.e. verbal ornamentation may for convenience' sake be regarded as euphuism. Nevertheless many of the characteristics of euphuism proper may be noted in the following lines.

Even at the beginning of the play we have the passage :

And then grace us in the disgrace of death ;  
When, spite of cormorant devouring Time,  
Th' endeavour of this present breath may buy.

\*

\*

\*

The mind shall banquet, though the body pine,  
Fat paunches have lean pates : and dainty bits  
Make rich the ribs, but bankrupt quite the wits.

We have not only antithetical terms like 'grace'—'disgrace ; 'banquet'—'pine', 'fat'—'lean', 'make rich'—'bankrupt', placed in a balanced form, but also the alliterative jingle in 'devour' and 'endeavour', 'paunches' and 'pates', not to speak of the quaint metaphor—'Cormorant devouring Time'. Take also the following example :

Fair ladies masked are roses in their bud ;  
Dismasked, their damask sweet commixture shown,  
Are angels vailing clouds, or roses blown.

—V. 2. 295.

Note the antithesis, alliteration in the above lines, and as for playing with words, punning etc. there cannot be a better instance than the following :

Light seeking light doth light of light beguile :  
So, ere you find where light in darkness lies,  
Your light grows dark by losing of your eyes.

1. 1. 77

Coming now to the ink-horn decoration, the love of long words which Ascham, for example, has damned as "indenture English" and "strange and inkhorne termes" in Edward Hall, we have a parody of it in Costard's remark :

Moth : They have been at a great feast of languages, and  
stolen the scraps.

Costard : O, they have lived long on the alms-basket of  
words. I marvel thy master hath not eaten thee  
for a word ; for thou art not so long by the head  
as *honorificabilitudinitatibus* : thou art easier swallow-  
ed than a flap-dragon.

V. 1. 31

Nevertheless Costard, like most Elizabethans, was enchanted with the music of learned words even though the meaning might not be clear to him.

Remuneration : O, thats the Latin word for three farthings—  
remuneration—'What's the price of this inkle ?'—'One penny'  
—'No, I'll give you a remuneration' : Why it carries it.  
Remuneration.

III. 1. 122

And at the lowest level this love of long words descends to malapropism, of which one of the earliest examples is, of course, Dull :

I myself reprehend his own person, for I am his Grace's  
tharborough : but I would see his own person in flesh and  
blood.

1.1.181

At the higher level the pretension to sophistication has been variously parodied through Armado, Holofernes and Nathaniel. For example, the love of synonyms and the use of learned words to lend a false dignity to simple things (the last borrowed from Sidney) may be illustrated by the following speeches of Armado and Holofernes :

I did encounter that obscene and most preposterous event,  
that draweth from my snow-white pen the ebon-coloured  
ink, which thou viewest, beholdest, surveyest, or seest.

I. 1.231.

Sorted and consorted, contrary to thy established proclaimed  
edict and continent canon.

I. 1.244

The posterior of the day, most generous Sir, is liable, congruent and measurable for the afternoon ; the word is well culled, chose, sweet and apt, I do assure you, Sir, I do assure.

V. 1.76

This is a gift that I have, simple, simple ; a foolish extravagant spirit, full of forms, figures, shapes, objects, ideas, apprehensions, motions, revolutions ; these are begot in the ventricle of memory, nourished in the womb of *pia mater*, and delivered upon the mellowing of occasion.

IV. 2.59

But when all is said about the verbal affection caricatured in the play, it becomes an intoxication with Shakespeare till, as Pater says, it turns into a "delicate raillery of Shakespeare himself at his chosen manner".

*As you Like It* is generally regarded as a pastoral comedy based on Lodge's romance, *Rosalynde*, and Shakespeare's indebtedness to Lyly's *Euphues* is little recognized even though the full title of Lodge's romance is 'Rosalynde : Euphues Golden Legacie' in which Euphues is the supposed author of the tale which professes to have been "found after his death in his cell at Silixedra" (Title-page of the 1952 edition). T. W. Bond, in his edition of Lyly's works, does not only discover many parallel passages of Lyly's novel in Shakespeare's plays but also notices a parallel between the Lylyan hero, Euphues and "the melancholy Jaques". The passage is worth quoting :

Like Euphues Jaques has made false steps in youth, which have somewhat darkened his views of life : like Euphues, he conceals under a veil of sententious satire a real goodness of heart, shown in his action towards Audrey and Touchstone. A traveller, like Euphues or like Cassander, he has a 'melancholy of his own, compounded of many simples, extracted from many objects' and is prepared, as his prototype actually does, to lecture on every conceivable theme. He will moralize every spectacle, and, free charter given,

Will through and through

Cleanse the foul body of the infected world.

Finally, like Euphues, he is something out of harmony with youthful pastimes and the life of luxury and dalliance. While the others are busy with wedding festivities and their return to court, Jaques bethinks him of matter to be learned from a converted duke, as Euphues learned from Fidus or the hermit Cassander and retires like Euphues to Silixsedra, to indulge his melancholy at the deserted cave. These resemblances and the full title of Lodge's novel considered, it seems impossible to avoid the conclusion that we have in Jaques a reproduction of, and a verdict on, the hero of Lyly's famous work.

Unlike Euphues, however, Jaques has no friend, though his company is sincerely sought by the Senior Duke, another philosopher in the play.

I love to cope him in these sullen fits,  
For then he's full of matter.

But when after having met the motley, Jaques has a sudden fit of reforming "the foul body of the infected world" the Duke at once throws cold water on his enthusiasm. And as the philosopher-Duke reassumes his ducal authority Jaques too has no need of him any more and turns to the new convert in quest of "much matter to be heard and learned" from him. Actually Jaques has been intended by Shakespeare to play no active role in the play except as a moralizer or commentator. Like Euphues and all other Lylyan moralists whose counsels none of the young people cared to heed, Jaques is an ineffective moralizer, who is summarily dismissed alike by Orlando and Rosalind as they severally meet him before their own meeting. Jaques has however a kindred spirit in Touchstone, the wise fool, and once at least in the whole play is the melancholy man so amused that he laughs like a chanticleer one full hour as he hears the motley moralize on the clock. The Senior Duke on his part appreciates Touchstone, as he does Jaques, because of his wit which he presents in the garb of folly, his "stalking horse". Just as the fool uses every opportunity for a joke Jaques also takes his chance to lecture on every conceivable theme. Between the two, the licensed fool and the wise railer, Shakespeare has established another point of contact as when he makes Olivia in *Twelfth Night* rebuke Malvolio for his incapacity to enjoy the innocent joke of the clown :

...there is no slander in an allowed fool, though he do nothing but rail ; nor no raillery in a known discreet man, though he do nothing but reprove.

Jaques and Touchstone, the two new characters added by Shakespeare to the story that he borrowed from Lodge, have minimum contribution to the plot of the play, though between them they appropriate, next to Rosalind, the largest number of lines. Mutually opposed on many fundamental points, they provide counter-points, to almost every attitude or view presented in the play. Thus the recurrence of antithesis, a typical Lylyan device, is integrated into a dialectic pattern which characterizes the structure of the play. Evidently, Shakespeare has given a new dimension to Lodge's story by raising it to a philosophical level, and here one can detect the influence of Lyly.

Among the major comedies of Shakespeare *As you Like It* has a dearth of action. Shakespeare has omitted one important event viz, Saladyne's rescue of Alinda in his version of Lodge's romance, but he has enhanced the scope of parallelism by making the two dukes, the usurper and the usurped, brothers to provide a contrast to the wicked Oliver and the magnanimous Orlando. Even the three pairs of Lodge's lovers have a fourth pair added to them in Touchstone and Audrey. But while in *Love's Labour's Lost*, or for that matter in Lodge's romance too, the lovers repeat the steps one another as in a well-ordered dance, the quartet of lovers in *As you like It* seem to be doing the same thing though they are doing something different... In the fifth act the lovers singing—

And so am I for Phebe  
And I for Ganymede  
And I for Rosalind  
And I for no woman

echo one another but they mean quite different things. The apparent symmetries involving all sorts of asymmetries make for a complexity of design.

Here, the role of Touchstone is to be particularly recognized because it is he above all others who charges the play with a critical spirit. The moment Rosalind is sentimentally affected either at the sight of the forest of Arden or by the pangs of the sighing lover Silvius, the 'material fool' takes her up sharply, remarking that he was better when at the court because there is something like home-comfort which the forest cannot afford and also recalling, at the next turn, his affliction when as a lover of Jane Smile he broke his sword on a stone taking it for a hypothetical rival. His parody of Orlando's verse which he compares to the butter woman's rank to market, his bantering description of his own affair with Audrey in which he compares himself with the amorous Ovid—the exiled poet

among the Goths and he among the goats of Audrey—punctures the time-worn poetical-pastoral convention.

Never more does Rosalind reveal her heart-pangs except when she is alone with Celia. Her delicate pretences to her lover, her masquerades, her critical dissection of love's central creed as a madness deserving the whip and simultaneous perception that "whippers are in love too" distinguish her from the disdainful mistress which literary convention would have her play. Remarkable in this connection is the fact that many of the warnings uttered by the Lylyan moralists against the wiles of women are repeated by herself ("the wiser, the waywarder") to damp her lover's enthusiasm. Her purpose in doing this is to test if her lover's passion is as deep as her own, which however cannot be sounded because it "hath an unknown bottom like the bay of Portugal". Though herself deeply involved, she has the dramatic capacity to project herself in her lover in whom she expects the devotion of Troilus, a Leander. Yet she makes a sportive mockery of the romantic heroes themselves as she does of the wicked bastard of Venus, Cupid, whose own blindness causes blindness in the lovers including herself. This sportiveness coupled with passion, detachment in spite of involvement gives her a complexity, which is not to be found elsewhere in Shakespeare's heroines, not to speak of Lodge's, whose Rosalynd at her best warns herself against the dangerous infatuation when feeling the warmth of it in herself :

Have minde on the forepassed fortunes, feare the worst, and  
intangle not they selfe with present fancies : least loving in  
hast thou repent thee at leasure.

It is through Rosalind's unbiased, critical eyes again that Shakespeare makes us see the other love-affairs in the correct perspective. The suddenness of Celia's passion for Oliver and his for her—an extreme instance of love's blindness, would not seem so queer that it actually is, but for Rosalind's humorous description of it in terms of "the fight of two rams or Cæsar's thrasonical brag of 'I came, saw and overcame'". Similarly, her scathing ridicule of the sighing shepherd Silvius—"it is such fools as you/That makes the world full of ill-favoured children", following a common rustic girl "like foggy south puffing with wind and rain", makes the conventional love postures seem so absurd. By contrast Rosalind's own affair with Orlando appears somewhat near to life. Orlando, however, displays many of the conventional love poses : writing poems and playing "the unfortunate he" he was found under a tree "like a dropped acorn". But the general quality of his bad verse

lends itself so easily to Touchstone's parody that one might suspect that he has not been "exalted" in the traditional way, and he has at least one realistic quality of unpunctuality. Twice does he fail to keep his appointment with Rosalind and once alone he has the real explanation of an accident, but on the second occasion he has nothing more to say than "My fair Rosalind I come within an hour of my promise". As to the affair between Touchstone and Audrey we have the realist's own description of it ("As the ox has his bow, sir, the horse his curb.....so man hath his desires") as a downright sensuality, to which he would give a large scope by a perfunctory marriage but for Jaques' timely intervention.

It is significant that Jaques, in whom T. W. Bond has seen a prototype of the Lylyan hero Euphues, has nothing to do in the main affair of the romantic comedy except preventing the bad marriage of Touchstone with Audrey. In Lyly's novel the hero's own bitter experience in love forms the background of his disquisitions on love. Jaques, too, had his sensual past, but it is only incidentally referred to by the Senior Duke. Twice does Jaques encounter the lovers, Orlando and Rosalind, but every time he is dismissed, worsted in wit-combat before he can even present his point of view. The situations need a close scrutiny. On the first occasion he attempts to broach the theme of love by asking Orlando not to mar the barks of trees with writing verses on them, showing his dislike for his sweetheart's name and even calling Orlando a fool. But Jaques is dumbfounded at the lover's surly remarks :

I pray you, mar no moe of my verses with reading them  
ill-favouredly.

There was no thought of pleasing you when she was christened.

He (the fool) is drowned in the brook : look but in, and you  
shall see him.

Jaques has his next wit-combat with Rosalind, the theme being his 'melancholy', which is the result of "the contemplation of my travel". Rosalind takes him up sharply commenting that the experience is not worth the price he has paid for it—"sold your own lands to see other men's and then, to have seen much and to have nothing, is to have rich eyes and poor hands".

Farewell, Monsieur Traveller : look you lisp and wear  
strange suits, disable all the benefits of your own country,  
be out of love with your nativity and almost chide God for



making you that countenance you are, or I will scarce think  
that you have swam in a gondola. IV. 1.28

All these tirades against foreign travel are virtually an echo of Lyly's Callemachus and the old hermit. Only the position has been reversed with also the tone. What was a sententious moral in Lyly's old didacticians has taken on a derisive tone with the young mockers. There are traces also of Euphuës' 'cooling card' derived from Ovid's *Remedia Amoris*<sup>14</sup> in Rosalind's mocking enumeration of the remedies of love with which she claims to have cured her young suitor of his "mad humour of love" till passing on to "a living humour of madness" he preferred to "live in nook merely monastic". This is how the Lylyan didacticism has suffered a sea-change in Shakespeare.

In a romantic comedy like *As You Like It* it is Touchstone with his critical acceptance of life rather than Jaques with his cynical rejection of it that has an appropriate place. Here the moralist's role is beyond doubt unenviable: that of a mocker mocked. In fact, the sermonizing moralist has seldom any status in Shakespeare. Nevertheless Jaques has his worth appreciated at least by one man in the play, viz., the Senior Duke though he happens to be the main target of Jaques' cynical banter. Fundamentally different, they have one point of similarity: the Duke too has something of the moralizer in himself who finds "tongues in trees, books in the running brooks/Sermons in stones and good in everything". And Amiens congratulates his master on his delighted acceptance of the new condition in the forest, from which however he returns to the court when opportunity comes for him to resume his ducal responsibility. Jaques, on the other hand, is temperamentally a euphuist who has stepped into the Arcadian world where he can hardly acclimatize himself. Yet he is out of love with the court itself, which the euphuistic heroes also shun to retire to a cave as Jaques does. Shakespeare has consistently used this melancholy moralist to counter the conventional attitudes to the forest and the court so that the play acquires a complexity not to be found elsewhere. For example, Jaques sees in the deer driven by the hunters from their native haunts in the forest the evils of the court repeated, the Senior Duke acting as the usurper like his brother who has driven him away from the court. The wounded deer deserted by its companions puts him in mind of the bankrupt neglected by the wealthy burghers, and its shedding tears in the needless stream recalls the ways of the wordly men making their testament in favour of the man who has already enough.

Ever since Theocritus and Virgil the bliss of Arcadian life has been recognized by poets and moralists. It is not only "free from the evils of the envious court, it has its positive charm with the stream babbling by on the margin of which there grows the olive grove where convenient caves lie ready to receive the truants from the court. There are the outlaws in the forest who "fleet the time carelessly as they did in the golden world"—hunting deer, enjoying their alfresco meals under the shades of trees with warbling birds to whose sweet notes they turn their song. But actually as Amiens sings his song inviting people to come under the greenwood tree shunning ambition, Jaques suggests the addition of a new stanza, the import of which is that to abandon "wealth and ease" is the act of an ass or fool. And there is also Touchstone to philosophize on the clock, which being a symbol of social life man has to live with others is naturally useless in the forest : so the satire is indeed doubled. In another scene, after the killing of the deer the hunters go in a triumphal procession, which is a ritual of the forest, but Jaques is still there to suggest that the successful hunter should be crowned with horns.

Coming now from the intruders to the real inhabitants of the forest we meet the rustics like the tongue-tied William and the sluttish wench Audrey, who have been placed over against the pastoral lovers like Phebe and Silvius in order to show that the real shepherds and shepherdesses are far different from what the poetical-pastoral convention would have them to be. Even Corin, the counterpart of the old Virgilian shepherd, is no verse-maker but a homespun old fellow whose only pride is to see his ewes and rams well-fed. But Shakespeare has endowed him with a point of view which coming in conflict with Touchstone's adds to the complexity of the play. Their dialectics on the comparative merit of court life and forest life leads to no clear preference in favour of either, each being at bottom the same. Though the wickedness of court life is never for a moment lost sight of, it has also its opportunities for real service which induce the truants to return there with of course the solitary exception of Jaques who has never been at home anywhere. While Lodge on the one hand, and Sidney and Greene on the other, have their marked preference for one way of life, Shakespeare's attitude is double-edged : he shows the virtues and vices of the country and the court leaving it to the readers to make their own choice, as they like it.

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- \* Compare Lyly's *Euphues : The Anatomy of Wit* : ..... "though the Camomill, the more it is trodden and pressed down, the more it spreadeth, yet the violet the often it is handled and touched, the sooner it withereth and decayeth"
- The Complete works of John Lyly*,  
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- "Hee that toucheth pitche shall be defiled" .. *Ibid* ; P.250.
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## SHAKESPEARE TRANSLATIONS IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY BENGAL

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REENA GHOSH

### I

In the middle of the 18th Century, from the ships carrying Clive and his associates belonging to the Hon'ble John Company, Shakespeare may be said to have landed on the bank of the Ganges. Ever since his domain has kept extending and getting consolidated. In spite of great dissimilarities of life and social outlook, the Bengali mind ultimately installed Shakespeare in the pantheon of its literary gods. The whole of the 19th century relates the history of the assimilation of Shakespeare by the Bengali mind.

A good many "writers" of the company were opportunistic, greedy and given to misadventure. Besides, some of them were quite uneducated and unscrupulous. But as a class, these writers enjoyed drama and they established the first stage, Old Playhouse, in the year 1753. David Garrick, at the request of some highly-placed employees of John Company trained and sent one of his disciples to stage *Richard III* and *Hamlet*. New Playhouse or Calcutta Theatre, established in 1775, was also a result of their endeavour. As a matter of fact, the popularity of Shakespeare amongst the Bengali in the early 19th Century developed through their introduction to these Shakespearean performances.

The 19th century popularity of Shakespeare followed certain definite trends. Newly established schools encouraged reading and staging Shakespeare. The amateur and public stage freely adapted Shakespeare in the original as well as in translation. Last but not least, the influence of Shakespeare left an indelible mark on the contemporary Bengali drama.

Shakespearean drama was included in the curriculum of the institutions established in the 19th century, like David Drummond's Academy, Sherborne's School in Chitpore, David Hare's School at Goldighi, Rev. Duff's institute at Hedua, and Oriental Seminary of Gourmohan Adhya at Chitpore. Thus the Bengali mind was allowed to move on beyond the

utilitarian, commercial facade of the Company into the Sanctum of English culture. Derozio as a boy in 1822 recited Shylock in David Drummond's Academy. Madhusudan as a boy in 1834 acted as Duke of Gloucester in *Henry VI*.

Several performances of Shakespeare were held at Calcutta Theatre, Chowringhee Theatre, the Athaeneum and Sans Souci. In 1848, Vaishnav Charan Adhya did *Othello* at Sans Souci Theatre. This was the first time that a Bengali took part in a Shakespearean play. In 1832, *Julius Caesar* was staged on the first night of performance at Hindoo Theater, founded by Prasanna Kumar Tagore. Peary Mohan Bose arranged a performance of *Julius Caesar* at his own Jorasanko residence in 1853. In 1874, *Rudrapāl*, in other words *Macbeth*, translated by Haralal Ray, was staged there in 1875. Special mention should be made of *Macbeth*, translated by Girish Chandra, which was performed in 1893. *Harirāj*, an adaptation of *Hamlet* by Nagendranath Choudhury, was staged by Amarendranath Datta at Classic Theatre in 1905.

In the 19th century, there was hardly any litterateur worth his name, who did not write on Shakespeare. All of them—Madhusudan, Vidya-sagar, Ramendra Sundar, Haraprasad Shastri, Bankim Chandra, Rabindranath—discussed Shakespeare. And besides, those who were not primarily engaged in writing, such as Vivekananda, Brojendranath Seal, Acharya Profulla Chandra, Sri Aurobindo—a various assortment of talents—wrote on Shakespeare. Shakespeare was an arch not only for translators and critics, but for dramatists as well. Even in most writings other than drama, the influence of Shakespeare was far from negligible. Thus while Bengali drama was to some extent seasoned and decorated in the all-but-forgotten traditions of Sanskrit drama, its ingredients came mainly from Shakespeare.

## II

उपि

A. Monckton appears to be the first translator of Shakespeare in Bengali. In the *Annals of Fort William* by T. Roebuck, it has been recorded that Monckton translated *The Tempest* in 1809. No copy seems to have survived. It looks like a piece of paradox that Fort William, a symbol of ambitious colonialism, should not only initiate and encourage practice in Bengali composition, but inspire the first Bengali translation of Shakespeare and that, too, by a foreigner.

Following this isolated attempt, a fairly continuous process of

development in Shakespeare translation can be traced from 1848 onwards. Between 1848 and 1859, that is, in the pre-Madhusudan period, the translators attempted to popularize the stories of Shakespeare amongst readers unacquainted with English. They did not consider that their contemporary readers would be able to appreciate the proper translations of Shakespearean drama. They wanted to lay the foundations of Shakespeare translation in the future years. For this purpose, Gurudas Hazra, Muktaram Vidyabagish and Edward Roer chose Lamb's *Tales* as most suitable for translation.

Gurudas Hazra translated *Romeo and Juliet*. Muktaram Vidyabagish translated twenty of Lamb's *Tales* and Edward Roer, nine. It is significant that none of these translators Indianized the names of the characters and places in their writings. They were remarkable for their lucidity and loyalty to the original.

Harachandra Ghose was the first to claim the honour of being the forerunner of a long list of translators of Shakespearean drama. In 1854, he translated *The Merchant of Venice* as *Bhānumatī-Chittabilās* and in 1864, *Romeo and Juliet* as *Charumukha-Chittaharā*. As translator he wrote in the preface that he had made some changes and additions to make the writings suitable for the Indian taste. Unfortunately, the name of Harachandra Ghosh has been just recorded in the history of literature ; the literary excellence of his works has not been recognized because of an excessive use of 'mimicry and drollery' (as defined by Lebedeff), well-worn conventions of Sanskrit drama, and inappropriate language.

In respect of the first original drama in Bengali, it appears that both *Bhadrarjuna* by Taracharan Sikdar and *Kirtī-bilas* by G. C. Gupta, were published in 1852. Taracharan Sikdar wrote in the preface that he composed his writing according to the norms of European drama. *Bhadrārjuna* was written on the model of Shakespeare's romantic comedy. Everywhere—in the selection of subject, in the development of the theme, in its technique—the influence of Shakespeare is apparent. In the preface to *Kirtibilās*, a detailed justification of tragedy and its adaption in Bengali literature has been discussed in detail. The characters and episodes of *Kirtibilās*, have a great similarity with those of *Hamlet* and further, the speech of Meghnath echoes the dialogue of Pompey in *Measure for Measure* (IV. ii).

Between 1859 and 1872, i.e. till the establishment of the public stage or during the period when Madhusudan figured prominently, there was an array of translators ranging from the indifferent to the talented.

Madhusudan was the first to compose Bengali drama successfully by adopting the western technique. *Kṛiṣṇakumārī* was the first successful tragedy in Bengali drama. The protagonist Bhim Singh and Balendra Singh decidedly resemble Lear (*King Lear*) and Bastard (*King John*). The old man's dialogue in the second act, first scene of Mayakanan, is a translation of Act I, scene i of *Midsummer Night's Dream* (22-27). Finally, the tragic concept of Ravana's character is primarily and basically Shakespearean.

During this period only translations of the original texts came forth. Every translation shows an adaptation to Indian culture. Original writings in Bengali deriving their inspiration from Shakespeare flourished while Bankim Chandra, Dinabandhu and others started gaining prominence.

In 1868 *Kusum-Kumari* by Chandrakali Ghose and *Suśīlā-Vīrsinhā* by Satyendranath Tagore were published. Both were Indianised translations of *Cymbeline*. Satyendranath Tagore's translation is free from the usual excesses of sentimentalism and melodramatic expression of current Bengali drama. Hemchandra Bāndopadhyay translated two Shakespearean plays, *The Tempest* (Nalini-Vasanta) and *Romeo and Juliet* about this time. Both these dramas have flow and fluency but their grotesque language, rustic humour, and crude reflection of contemporaneity make them unpleasant reading. Particularly in *Romeo and Juliet*, these faults are prominent.

In respect of the literary translation of Shakespeare, Vidyasagar is a major figure. The greater part of his writing is translation. *Bhrantivilās* (*Comedy of Errors*) by Vidyasagar is truthful in sense and language, and is lucid and artistic.

Shakespeare's genius gradually pervaded widely and deeply, even in the field of original Bengali drama. The intense tragedy of *Vidhabā Vibāha* by Umesh Chandra Mitra, written in 1868, is undoubtedly a result of Shakespeare's influence. Characterization in this drama is also reminiscent of the Shakespearean style. Tarak Chandra Churamoni wrote *Sapatnī* in 1858 which ends in comedy, but its whole atmosphere is tragic and it can be termed as a 'dark comedy'.

The National Theatre was established in Calcutta in 1872. What had been but a meagre trickle of dramatic writing now broadened into a wide stream of dramatic compositions by various dramatists as Dinabandhu Mitra, Girishchandra Ghose, Dwijendralal Roy, Rabindranath Tagore and others.

Much of Shakespeare was translated during this part of the 19th century. The greater tragedies of Shakespeare were translated more than once, while the comedies were not left out. It is to be noted however that most of these were Indianised adaptations, and translators, in most cases, perhaps took more liberties than were warranted.

At first, naturally the audience at the performance of Shakespeare's plays was limited to the highly educated : those who knew the English language and literature, and knew them well. But after 1872, the audience expanded mainly owing to the fact that less-educated people, who used to patronise Yātrā and Pāñchalī, now came to appreciate Shakespeare's plays. That is why a faithful translation of *Macbeth* by Girish Chandra attracted a contemporary comment by the journal *Friend of India*. The performance of *Macbeth* marks an epoch in the annals of the Native Stage. Yet Girish Chandra found the auditorium practically empty at the time of the performance. On the other hand, the Indianized adaptation of *Hamlet* as 'Hārīrāj' was popularly accepted when staged by Amarendranath Datta in 1897. Perhaps that explains why virtually none of the translators of this epoch chose to translate Shakespeare straight.

Many original dramas were written at this stage when along with the writings of Girish Chandra, Dwijendralal, Rabindranath and such other talented writers, numerous common or garden writers also joined in to help. The influence of Shakespeare became wider and deeper in the field of original drama. The technique of Shakespearean drama was accepted and imitated in nearly all such compositions. The five-act structure, the presentation of the story, the co-ordination between the main plot and sub-plots, the use of verse at emotional moments and of prose during ordinary conversation became an accepted common practice. The superficial aspects of Shakespeare's plays became the part and parcel of Bengali drama but only a few writers succeeded in assimilating Shakespeare's tragic view.

Bankim Chandra never translated any of Shakespeare's plays and he was not a dramatist either. But Shakespeare's influence appears to have been most completely absorbed by Bankim Chandra, as manifested successfully in his literary compositions. This influence is not synonymous with unqualified imitation or adaptation but it may be compared with the lighting up of a torch of one genius kindled by that of a fellow-genius. The main contents of Shakespeare as well as of Bankim Chandra may be described as the unfathomable power of Nature over human life



and the manifestation of the unravelled mystery of the ultimate truth in life.

The works of Dinabandhu Mitra, the great playwright after Madhusudan, mainly reveal the influence of Shakespearian comedy. The real attraction of Dinabandhu's plays is the easy-flowing, glittering and bubbling humour of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *The Comedy of Errors* etc. Moreover, the unforgettable characterisation of Nimchand (*Sadhabār Ekādaśī*) is mainly Shakespearian.

The western dramatic technique was employed in the plays of Jyotirindranath very deftly. His writing is completely free from the usual sentimental melodramatic effect of the Bengali drama. The influence of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* on *Svapnamayī* is apparent. His historical plays are likely to remind one of the Shakespearian historical plays. His *Julius Caesar* is a true example of successful Shakespeare-translation in Bengali.

It would appear from the survey of the complete works of Girish Chandra, one-time monarch of the Bengali stage, that they imitate the externalities of Shakespearian drama. The tragic view is found missing in Girish Chandra. On many occasions countless deaths and lamentations beyond measure become the concluding feature of his plays. But his *Macbeth* is at once an example of his accomplishment as a translator and of the translatability of Shakespeare in Bengali. This piece of translation reveals facets of Girish Chandra's dramatic genius which his critics have hardly touched upon.

Rabindranath's many-splendoured brilliance became apparent even in his younger age, especially in his translation of Shakespeare. Unfortunately, only a part of the translated *Macbeth* has been recovered. The poems of *Saiśava Sangīt* in *Achalita Samgraha*, 1st part, also show a profound Shakespearian influence.

The plays written by Rabindranath in the earlier years bear the easily discernible marks of Shakespearian influence. Such influence is almost obvious in his two full-blooded tragedies, *Rājā O Rānī* and *Bisarjana*, and also in romantic comedies, *Śeṣrakṣā* and *Chirakumār Sabhā*. Jaisingha of *Bisarjana* and Kumarsen of *Rājā O Rānī* have been created after the image of the most popular and most discussed character of *Hamlet*. However, the intellectual aspect of Hamlet's character is missing. Again, the character of the crowd of the Shakespearian plays has been adapted by Rabindranath even in his symbolic plays. In the field of the novel also, viz. *Chôkher Bāli* and *Chaturanga*, the impact of powerful

passion as in Shakespeare can be found (the characters of Vinodini and Damini could have been born of the spirit of Cleopatra).

Efforts to imitate Shakespeare have been made in Bengali drama for a long time. The playwrights preceding Dwijendralal, nearly without exception, studied the Shakespearean dramatic technique. This technique has been best adopted by Dwijendralal. Such Shakespearean features as high tempo, intense suspense, the tension born of internal and external conflict, the poetic quality of dialogue have been faithfully imitated by him. He discards the occult and any excess of devotional sentiment in dramas based on legends and truthfully presents historical forces in his historical dramas. Here he is clearly indebted to Shakespeare.

Of the Shakespeare-translations during 19th Century following Dwijendralal, *Naidāgh Nisīṭh Svapna* by Nabin Chandra Sen is notable. Easy-flowing expression, variety of 'metres and simple fun combine to make it pleasant reading.

Some stray attempts at translations from Shakespeare were also made during this time. Haranchandra Rakshit very diligently narrated the stories of Shakespeare's plays in three volumes. These stories are faithful translations. All such translations may not quite appeal to a 'superior' critic, but they show a definite trend: the adaptation of Shakespeare to an alien culture and climate.

### III

Between the English language and the Bengali there are no linguistic affinities except some distant ones, for both of them belong to the Indo-Aryan group. But in the domain of creativity perhaps every national mind, however narrow or chauvinistic, partakes of the universal human mind. Of this universal mind, Shakespeare was perhaps the greatest partaker. There, we feel, the Bengali mind and Shakespeare meet, and even fraternise.

In Shakespeare-translations, one should be faithful to the original. But too much of fidelity does justice neither to the original nor to the translation.

It is necessary to be careful about language and its nuances in translating Shakespeare. Since the translation is that of drama, it must have the necessary theatrical qualities. Shakespearean dialogue should be translated into proper Bengali conversations. Words having more than one

meaning or words with various associations in the original should in translation retain their ambiguity and richness as far as possible. Hemchandra's translation of *Romeo and Juliet* illustrates a major inadequacy in this respect. Mercutio's aristocratic lineage and education can be understood easily in Shakespeare's text but not so in the translation. Carelessness on the translator's part makes Mercutio use a language fit for lower classes and so the character has been altogether changed. Further, the suggestiveness of Cupid's arrow could be rendered in Bengali, but Hemchandra never paid any heed to this. Likewise, the famous moon-light scene in *The Merchant of Venice* has lost all its beauty in Harachandra Ghose's translation for its inappropriate language.

It is very difficult, almost impossible, to transplant the syntax of Shakespeare's language and his idiom. The use of the syntax of the Bengali language and Bengali idioms is necessary, but this should not destroy the flavour of the original. In Shakespeare, there is much idiomatic expression and rhetoric which makes a translator's work very difficult.

There is difference in vocabulary, in structure, in syntax and also in idiom between these two languages. Nagendranath Sarbadhikari's inability to properly translate Prospero's speech to Miranda in *The Tempest* (I, i) illustrates such a difficulty. Such speeches as Lady Macbeth's—

Memory, the warder of the brain  
Shall be a fume, and the receipt of reason  
a limbeck only

Or such lines in *Hamlet*—

Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer  
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,  
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles...

are very difficult to translate in three lines in Bengali. If the speech is made longer in the translation, the concentration of the original is destroyed.

The ideal of Shakespeare-translation should be, as Gogol said, like a transparent pane of glass. Contemporary life should enliven it and the language should bear contemporaneity.<sup>1</sup>

As in all other translations, the writer and the reader should come closer in Shakespeare-translation also.

The language of a Shakespeare-translation in Bengali must be

Bengali in its proper sense so that the reader would not be always conscious of its being a translation.

In Charuchandra Mukhopadhyā's translation of *The Tempest* (*Prakṛti*) Prospero's speech to Ferdinand has been exactly rendered, but some words and expressions do not follow the nature and style of the Bengali language.

In Shakespear-translations, usually a sentence or a phrase is taken as the unit, but sometimes the whole work is taken as the unit. Frequently, these three methods are used together in different proportions depending on the nature of the work to be translated.

#### IV

The greatest difficulty for the Shakespear-translators was the social difference between Elizabethan England and nineteenth-century Bengal. Lady Olivia, the heroine of *Twelfth Night*, speaks about her beauty to Viola, disguised as a man (I, V, II. 225-234). In Bengali society, it is unthinkable. Madhusudan said of nineteenth-century society, "It would shock the audience if I were to introduce a female (a virtuous one) discussing with a man, unless that man be her husband, brother or father.....".

There is also much difference between concepts of morality as existed in 19th century Bengal and Elizabethan England. The Brahminic ideal would not tolerate the saying of Gloucester about his son Edmund (I, 1). In Chandrakali Ghose's *Kusumkumārī* (*Cymbeline*) this difference in morality overwhelms Dwandapriya (Iachimo) with respect as he sees in Imogen an embodiment of chastity.

Every country has its own sense of humour according to the environment, social and moral outlook. In India, provinces have different senses of humour. There is doubt about the translatability of the conversation between Beatrice and Leonato (*Much Ado About Nothing*, II, i, ll. 27-34) and the conversation between Touchstone and Jacques (*As You Like It*, V, iii, ll. 65-77) in Bengali. An exact translation of these portions does not seem very possible and if translated it would not be enjoyed by the Bengali readers.

In Shakespear's drama, there are often references to old stories and characters. These are well known in England. But the Bengali readers

and audience do not know much of these references. So these should be left out or instead, some Indian story of the same type could be inserted. Foot-notes could also be given.

In *Julius Caesar*, Cassius says of Caesar to Brutus,

Why, man, he doth bestride the narrow world  
Like a Colossus, and we petty men  
Walk under his huge legs,.....(I, ii, pp. 135-137)

To bring out the sense of ironical praise in 'bestride' and 'colossus' in Bengali is quite impossible.

Natural differences in these two countries also make the task difficult. In Othello's speech before murdering Desdemona (V, ii, ll 3-5) two words, 'snow' and 'alabaster', are used; they are not very much known to a Bengali. In Iachimo's speech (*Cymbeline*, II, ii, ll. 15-16), lily is not a flower of the typical Bengali household, and its association is not the same as of lotus.

In Shakespeare, sometimes, some words or titles have been used which cannot be replaced or translated in Bengali. As in *The Twelfth Night*, Malvolio's use of yellow-stocking and cross-garter is not a Bengali practice. The words Earl, Duke etc. have no synonyms in Bengali. The translator has to accept English words or use equivalent phrase.

All languages consist of a systemetically organized set of oral-aural symbols. English and Bengali have different speech-rhythms. This is a great handicap for successful translations. Hamlet's speech (III, iv, ll. 53-67) becomes different in Bengali translation. It becomes either loose in structure or goes far from the original. This is evident in Lalit Mohan Adhikary's and Nagendranath Choudhury's translations of *Hamlet*.

Both these translations show that differences in speech-rhythm stand in the way.

There are two sides of a language, the referential and the emotive. Many a time in Shakespeare-translations, synonyms of English words or phrases could not be found. So the translators sometimes rejected them or explained them in a longer sentence. So either the expression of the original was changed or the Bengali-idiom was not used.

In Shakespeare, the second person singular number is used in addressing a person. But in Bengali, this sort of address is not in use.

Joined verbs are a characteristic feature of the Bengali language. Most of the verbs are formed with *kr* (to do) and *bhū* (=to be). It

makes Bengali soft and sonorous, but loose in structure. Madhusudan used nominal verbs to remove this. But Shakespeare-translators have not been so careful and conscious as Madhusudan was.

To avoid the looseness Madhusudan used many Sanskrit words. Moreover, he used many Sanskrit and unused Bengali words to give a high tone to his blank verse and add a vigour and energy to the Bengali words. But this has not been followed by the nineteenth-century Shakespeare-translators.

The fourteen letters of a Bengali blank-verse line cannot follow the rhythm of the English iambic pentametre or tetrametre. Longer lines are needed here. The rhythm *Mahāpayār*, created by Rabindranath, is more useful in translating Shakespeare. Even before Rabindranath, Jyotirindranath used blank-verse with 18 letters in his *Julius Caesar*. He experimented with four kinds of blank verse. But unfortunately the Shakespeare-translators have not accepted his medium in their work.

Between the Shakespeare of England and the Bengali mind, there lies the distance of 'the seven seas.' Yet, in the nineteenth century, Shakespeare was translated many a time, and in the twentieth century, Shakespeare-translation has been again revived.

In spite of all their faults, the nineteenth-century Shakespeare translators are unforgettable. Sometimes they are successful in their translations, above all they are the first to introduce Shakespeare into Bengali. Their original writings inspired by Shakespeare are also remarkable. The following view on translators in general is certainly applicable to these Shakespeare-translators :

Every translator must be looked on as an honest broker in this general trade, concerned with fostering interchange, for whatever one may say about the short-comings of translation, it remains one of the most important and significant endeavors in the world's work .....Indeed, every translator is a prophet to his people.<sup>2</sup>

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## HESPERIDES AND 'THE CEREMONIES OF INNOCENCE': AN ESSAY ON ROBERT HERRICK

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SURABHI BANERJEE

### I

We were as twinn'd lambs that did  
frisk i'th' sun  
And bleat the one at th' other, what we  
chang'd/Was innocence for innocence

(*The Winter's Tale*, I.ii.67)

'Trivial' and 'pagan' are the generic epithets which criticism has attached to Robert Herrick's poetry. But to think of his poetry as pretty, trifling, deficient in seriousness, as the exhalation of an elegant mind, would be entirely misleading. The common estimation of him as a mere 'cavalier' is inadequate to explain the abounding vitality of his poetry.

The well-known Argument of his Book introducing *Hesperides*, where the poet writes :

I sing of Brooks, of Blossomes, Birds and Bowers :  
...of May-poles, Hock-Carts, Wassails, Wakes,  
...of Dews, of Raines...of Times trans-shifting.

—is not a mere catalogue of single and discrete delights, but a definition of Herrick's poetic métier as well. Basically, Herrick's is a jocund and exhilarating personality visualising and feasting upon the minutiae of the joy and delight of the natural world. Although his poetic mode is *not* strictly pastoral (compared to Theocritus, Bion and Moschus, the traditional pastoralists), and the genius of his world is *not* what the ancients called a kind of 'body sylvia' with 'a multitude of timber trees growing promiscuously', the Herrickian world is essentially Arcadian consisting of "harmless bucolics." He celebrates the innocence of the natural world and I think he is the first English poet to note the picturesqueness and the miniatures of homely country life with microscopic eyes. All his

little landscapes are exquisitely delicate ; for instance, in the following lines from 'The Apparition of his Mistress calling him to Elysium' :

Here in green meadows sits eternal May,  
Purpling the margents, while perpetual day  
So doubly gilds the air, as that no night  
Can ever rust the enamel of the light...

He seizes with ease, thoroughness and absolute perfection, the minute details of pastoral life. When we turn from the sheer sensuousness of such stanzas as :

Like to a solemn sober stream  
Bankt all with lilies and the cream  
Of sweetest cowslips filling them...

or

A savour like unto  
a blessed field/When the  
bedabbled Morn washes the golden ears of corn"

(Epithalamie),

to the vividly sketched interior :

Yet can thy humble roof maintain a choir,  
Of singing crickets by the fire,  
And the brisk mouse may feed himself with crumbs  
Till that the green-eyed kitling comes

(A Country Life)

—we are struck by the quickness of his observation, the charm and 'the bare sheer penetrating power' with which he invests the common objects of the natural world and removes the 'film of familiarity' therefrom. He observes the 'mites of candied dew in moony nights' and 'the frost-work glittering on the snow' and is keenly alive to all the sweet sounds and luscious scents of Nature and to the ever-shifting kaleidoscopic effects produced by light and shade.

The paean of natural objects is diversified with a ritualistic celebration of country revels for he sings also of village-customs and simple naive pleasures of rustic life. Along with the 'lily-wristed morn', 'the demasked meadows', 'the pebbly streams', he sings of 'balm', of oil of spice and ambergris, of May-poles, hock-carts, wassails, 'the moon-parched grain of purest wheat'—all constituting the 'nut-brown mirth' of country rituals. His brilliant deployment of the motifs of whiteness, smoothness, softness on which he dwells with a luxuriant, lingering appreciation,



for instance, in the following lines from *To the Most Fair and Lovely Mistress Anne Soame* :

The smell of morning's milk and cream,  
Butter of cowslips mixed with them—

has a palpable, tangible quality which invests his poetry with a warm, vibrant sensuality. Poems like *A Country Life*, *The Hock-Cart* reveal that Herrick is a poet of fruition as well as burgeoning, dealing with the teeming fertility of the earth.

He celebrates the innocent unalloyed ecstasy of the 'brown lads', of morris-dances, quintets and quaint revellings on Twelfth Night and sings with avid zeal, of the ceremonious ritual with which the rustics propitiated the occult powers of Nature. This celebration of country festivity is chequered with a predominant carpe-diem motif. As a poet, he is deeply aware of the 'time's wingéd chariot' and the transience of Youth and Beauty. His *Corinna's going-a-Maying*, I think, is a perfect illustration, being at once the depiction of the joys of the May-day celebration and a statement of the carpe-diem theme. The suggestion that Corinna is like a plant, a part of Nature, is reinforced throughout the poem. The reference to raindrop in the stanza beginning with : "Our life is short and our days run/As fast away as does the sunne..." —is also surcharged with deep implications. In such lines as : 'We shall grow old apace ..', there is a positive Keatsian ring, without the necessary 'poetic grace'. The total effect of the poem is one of gaiety tempered by the poignancy of the fugitiveness of Youth.

But there are poems with no overt reference to anything beyond the pure delight of the external world which evoke his close association with the classical masters—Virgil, Horace, Anacreon, Martial and Catullus. Here Herrick's poetic method may be described as one of 'distillation', for his subjects are mainly pastoral with a classical tinge and there are distinct echoes from Catullus, Martial, Ovid and Horace in his verse.

As he was a disciple of Jonson, Jonson beyond doubt introduced him to the classics, but I think, his mode of accepting the ideas he found there, was exclusively his own. First of all, I must contradict a statement by most editors of Herrick that Catullus was his model. Undoubtedly there are echoes from Catullus's *Carmina* in his most concise and sensuous lyrics like *To Anthea* and also in *Corinna* and in *To Live Merrily*, the poet tries to emulate Catullus's poetic vein. Like Catullus, too, he loves to dwell upon the mystic ritual of the wedding ceremony, but it should be

noted that the poet never mentions the one from whom he really took most of his form and colour. On the contrary, I believe that there is a striking affinity with the epigrams of Martial (just as Jonson used Martial very extensively and transformed him to English usages); the only difference to my mind, is that Herrick is much more religious-pagan of the two and he is as much a rural as Martial an urban poet. But in the incessant references to himself and his book, the fondness for gems and spices, the delight in the picturesqueness of private life, the sheer verbal compactness, the unique blend of sensitiveness and utter want of sensibility—Herrick's poetic genius is akin to Martial.

There is also a kinship between Herrick and Horace in respect of their philosophy of life, poetic tastes along with their surroundings, ideals and habits of life. His *To Country Life: Endymion Porter* is written in the Horatian vein. It illustrates a wit that looks forward to Marvell; the pithy, epigrammatic touch in such lines:

O happy life! if that their good  
The Husbandmen but understood.—

reminds us of Martial, but notably enough, the style of observation changes in Herrick.

In *A Country Life*, too, we have the world of Horace (professing a golden mean of life with modicum of pleasures), translated by the poet in the seventeenth-century terms. The mixture of stoicism and epicureanism in the following lines, for example:

Keeping the barking stomach wisely quiet  
Less with a meat, then needful diet

—are pure Horace, the archetypal 'locus amoenus' is also characteristic of Horace's sabine setting, *but* the minute details of the 'brisk mouse', 'singing crickets' and 'the green-eyed Kitling', are unmistakably Herrickian. Another striking point is that the swift-succession of holiday festivals finds no place in the Horatian verses on 'the country's sweet simplicity'.

Even his epithalamiums, although characteristic exercises in traditional genres, contain typical Herrickian touches. For instance, in 'Epithalamie: on *Sir Clipseby Crew and his Lady*', I think, the poet is at his best in his choral outbursts of greeting to the bride floating like a goddess, out of Elysium in a cloud of tiffany,

Treading upon vermillion  
And Amber; spicing  
the chaste air with fumes of Paradise.

The pure sensuousness sometimes harks back to Donne, but the language in such lines :

Strip her of Spring time, tender-whimpering maids  
Now Autumn's come, when all those flowery  
Of her delays must end...

—is pure Herrick.

## II

Fill me a mighty bowl  
Up to the brink/That I may drink  
Unto my Jonson's soul.

(A Bacchanalian Verse)

Jonson's precept and example led Herrick to the study and imitation of the Greek and Roman lyric that taught him structural form and precision of style and inspired him with his fastidious sense of artistic treatment. The classicism of Herrick was of Horace and Martial, but it was also that of Jonson who overthrew the Petrarchan traditions and replaced them by those of antiquity. The allegiance to Jonson might have kept him free from all the lyrical extravagances of his day. For it is interesting to note that his mistress-poems are free from the vices of conventional amatory verses.

Like Jonson, Herrick admires the aristocratic ideal symbolised by the great country-house, a centre of high civilization, a home of virtue, ceremonious order, learning and hospitality. Jonson's *Epigrams*, *Forest*, the *Underwoods*, consisting of the graceful love-song, the celebration of feasts and wit, the encomia of friends, epigrams, suggest favourite Herrickian themes. Herrick's vein in natural description is prefigured in the *Odes to Penshurst* and *Sir Robert Wroth*, of 1616. Again, Clerimont's Song in *The Silent Woman* :

Still to be neat still to be dressed,  
As you are going to a feast—

reminds us of Herrick's handling of Art versus Nature in *Delight in Disorder*.

Yet I feel that he lacks Jonson's intellectual force, massive integrity of mind, deep seriousness and fine moral perceptiveness. His sensuousness pitted against Jonsonian poetic mode in the following lines from *To Penshurst*, for instance :

The early cherry, with the later plum,  
 Fig, grape and quince, each in his time doth come ;  
 The blushing apricot and woolly peach  
 Hang on thy walls that every child may reach—

reveals that Herrick's passion wants concentration and assimilation for it is too ready to linger on externals.

And exclusively for this reason his celebration of 'the ceremonies of innocence' very often earns the epithet "pagan" and the question arises : Was he a 'pagan' who simply discovered in the religion of his time a suitable subject for verse likely to be popular ? For it has often been alleged that even when he attempts a Biblical theme or turns to Christian devotion, the pagan cast of his mind wells up in spite of himself. As he writes :

Receive these crystal vials filled  
 With tears, distilled  
 From teeming eyes ; to these we bring  
 Each maid, her silver fillenting.....

*The Dirge of Jephtha's Daughter*, sung by the Virgins, becomes not so much a Hebrew lamentation as an elegy for a young Greek or Roman maiden on whom the flowers of Spring are strewn. It is also interesting to compare Donne's *Hymn to God my God, in my sickness* with Herrick's *His Letanie, to the Holy Spirit* ; whereas Donne contemplates the significance of Calvary, the redemption of Man, the Communion of Saints, Herrick can scarcely transcend the natural fear of death which our flesh is heir to. In the following lines, for example :

When his Potion and his Pill,  
 His or none, or little skill,  
 Mee for nothing, but to kill ;  
 Sweet spirit comfort me !

there is no deep spiritual perception, no profound vision of heaven, nor any sense of God's majesty and love.

Undoubtedly, Herrick took interest in the pagan literature of Rome and Greece and also in the native English survivals of the old fertility cults. but to my mind, however, he is a Christian of the 17th century, an inheritor of that great world system of thought and vision. To be more precise, the poet is both Christian and pagan almost in the same breath for he will present his supplication to God the father and invite the protection of his "peculiar Lar". For his delight in the abundance of life does not prevent him from facing steadily the stark fact of man's

mortality, his daily experience as a Christian priest reinforcing his intuitive acceptance of the Horatian truism that the years are bearing us inexorably to the grave. For instance, in *To Daffodils* or *To Blossoms* there is a constant reminder of mortality, and mutability in such lines as :

We die as your hours do dry away,  
Like to the Summers raine,  
or as the Pearls of Morning's dew  
N'er to be found again.

It is true that profoundly philosophic content is lacking and the religious poems are not imbued with the passion of a Donne, the emotional depth and unction of a Herbert or the visionary insight of a Blake, yet the label 'pagan' is inadequate. For his poems not only constantly echo scripture, but what apparently seems heathenish or 'pagan', proves to be not so much Roman and classical as a universalized religious sentiment expressive of Anglicanism. His *Corinna's going-a-Maying*, again, I think, epitomizes this interpenetration of the two conflicting strands of Christianity and paganism in Herrick's poetry. The poem celebrates the pagan view but the poet refuses to suppress references to the Christian. We are nonplussed with the concluding stanza of the poem—what is its dominant note? Pagan, or Christian?—the mood, obviously is pagan, but through his reminder "We shall grow old apace..." the poet strikes a subtle, philosophical note.

Thus Herrick demands from us a multiple sensibility ; not only a capacity to respond to exquisite details of the 'frisking lillies', the 'chirring grasshopper' or 'the piping gnat', to 'delight in disorder' and 'wild civity' and to relish compound phrases like 'silken-slumber', 'great-eyed Kine', 'the lily-wristed morn', 'fresh quilted colours', 'dove-like eyes' and 'black-bearded vigil' (which often remind me of Hopkins and Keats), but also a capacity for brutal realism and for a sense of the *lacrimae-rerum* in the mundane world. One should not, therefore, be repulsed by the ostensible earthiness of his 'ceremonies of innocence'.

I believe that his greatness also lies in the fusion of lyricism with descriptive mode. He excels in miniatures, as I have indicated earlier, and captures the immediate sensuousness of feelings and experiences, but basically he is a lyric poet. The lyric note of these lines, limpid in their flow and liquid in their melody :

Lillies will languish, violets look ill,  
or    So smells the air of spiced wine,  
     or essences of jessamine

—appeal to our 'auditory imagination' and recall the felicity of the Restoration lyrists.

In his invariable responsiveness to the sensuous quality of experience he is kindred to, I think, Marvell, Keats and Shakespeare, but compared to Donne, he is lacking in the daring strokes of metaphysical wit, ingenious paradoxes and intellectual ambiguities. The fusion of pastoralism with classicism variegated with his unique lyricism and superb craftsmanship, rules out, to a certain extent, the strand of paganism and the deceptive simplicity of his poetry.

Jonson writes : "No son of mine can leap forth suddenly a poet by dreaming he hath been in Parnassus...there goes more to his making than so ; for Nature, Exercise, Imitation and study, *Art* must be added to make all these perfect". I feel Herrick had all but the final quality—that is 'Art'. Hence, to claim that he is a 'great' poet would be arrogant ; but to dismiss him as a naive, elegant trifler would be equally injudicious. This essay is not a resurrection of his reputation as a poet, but rather an attempt to indicate that Herrick's poetry is more complex, more richly perceptive and more finely balanced than his editors are generally prepared to grant. His range is extraordinarily ample and capacious, extending from the pastoral to the cynical, from the gross to an almost rococo elegance and from the prosaic to the dramatic. He may be lacking in the depth of a Blake, the mystic insight of a Wordsworth and the verbal grace and tour de force of a Marvell, but he is dowered with that quality of poetic "gusto" or "zest" accounting for the readability of his 'Woodnotes wild' which serve today as an anodyne for our "O'er-taxed heads, palsied hearts" and "the strong infection of our mental strife."

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